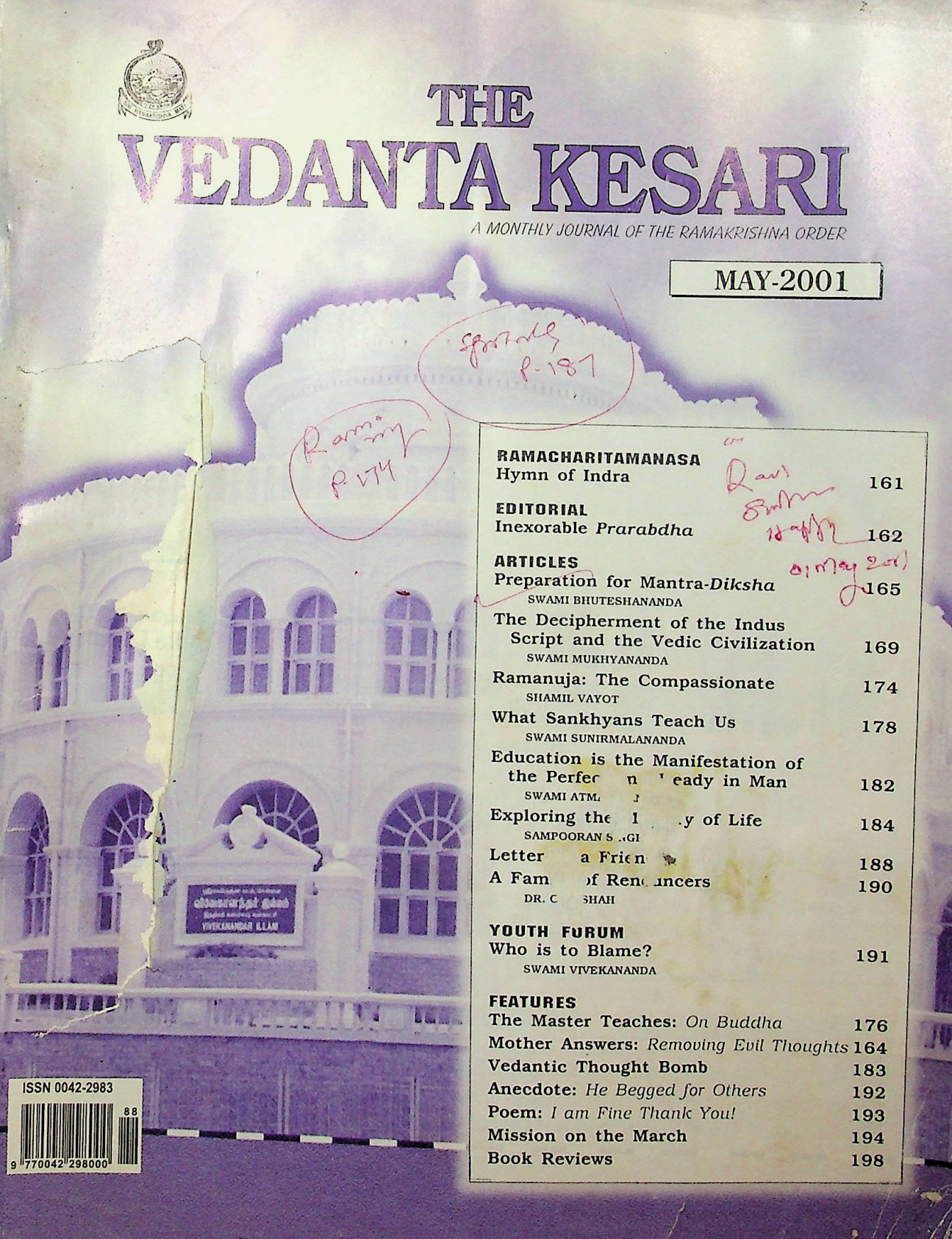


THE VEDANTA KESARI

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE RAMAKRISHNA ORDER

MAY-2001

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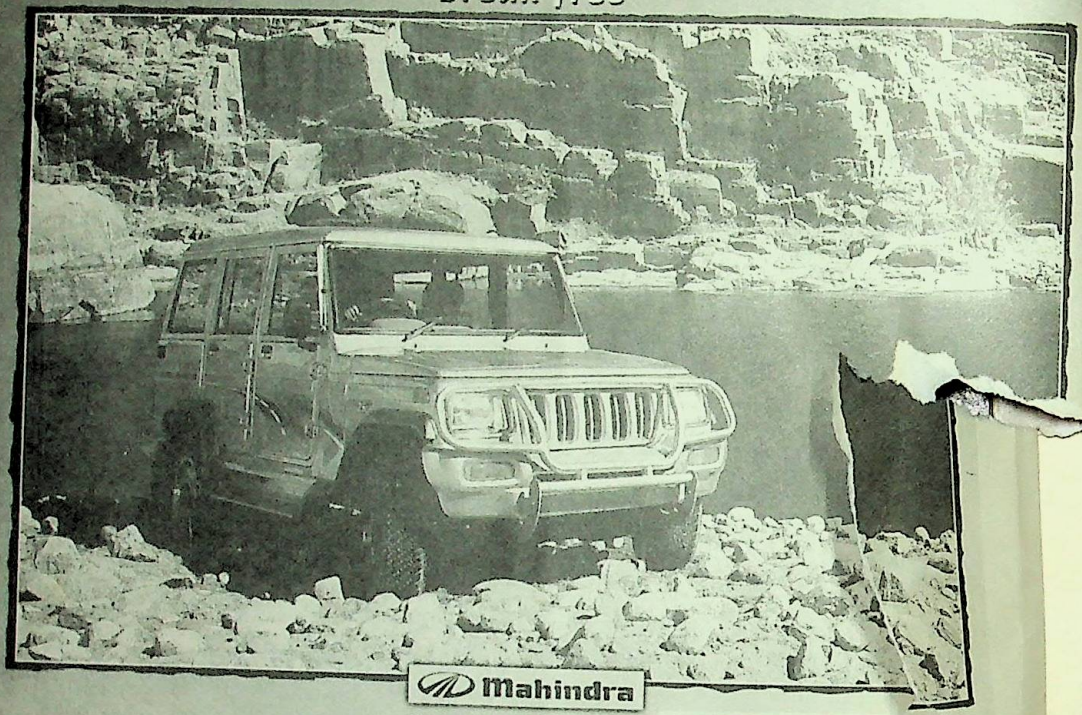
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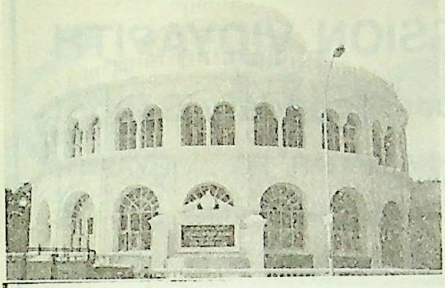
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Dear Friend,

VIVEKANANDAR ILLAM is a historic building, a pilgrimage for every student of Swami Vivekananda's life and teachings. For full nine days Swamiji stayed here, met visitors, preached, sang, prayed, and meditated. The place is still surcharged with his palpable divine presence.

You may be aware that Swami Vivekananda arrived a century ago i.e. in February 1897 at this bungalow, then called Ice-house or Castle Kernan, in Chennai. He stayed here from 6 to 14 February 1897 and delivered his fiery message for the reconstruction of India which are now available as 'Lectures from Colombo to Almora'.

The above building is also the home of the first Ramakrishna Math Centre in the South.

It was here that the Ramakrishna Math was housed in this same holy building from 1897 to 1906, under the spiritual luminary, Swami Ramakrishnananda, a brother disciple of Swami Vivekananda.

The building has been handed over to us on lease by the Government of Tamilnadu for renovating and setting up a permanent exhibition on Swami Vivekananda and the Indian Cultural Heritage. The building renovation was completed and the Ist phase of this exhibition was inaugurated on Monday the 20th December 1999 by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamilnadu. The Ist phase of the project has costed Rs.65 lacs. The work on the 2nd and 3rd phases estimated to cost Rs.85 lacs, will commence shortly. An endowment of Rs.50 lacs has also to be created for the maintenance of the exhibition.

So far we have been able to raise only an amount of Rs.15 lacs by way of donations. We request you to contribute liberally for this noble cause and receive the blessings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji.

All donations are exempt from Income Tax. Crossed Cheques or Demand Drafts may be drawn in favour of Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai.

Yours in the service of Humanity,

Swami Gautamananda

Swami Gautamananda
President

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AN APPEAL

Construction of Hostel block for Class XII

Friends,

You will definitely rejoice to learn that the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith at Deoghar, which is so close to your heart, has started "Plus 2 classes" from April this year. A new complex consisting of a Prayer Hall, Library, Hostel for class XI boys, Dining Hall, Indorium have already been constructed. But for dearth of fund construction work of Hostel for class XII boys could not be taken up as yet though class XII classes wili start from January - 2001. We require Rs. 14 lacs (4000 Sft. @ Rs. 350/= per Sft.) to complete this project.

We, therefore, appeal to our benevolent friends and admirers to contribute their mite for this great cause.

Cheques/drafts may be issued in favour of "Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar" - on State Bank of India, Deoghar.

Donations for this work are exempt from Income Tax U/S 80G of I.T. Act, 1961.

We shall put up suitable tablets for donation of Rs. 50,000/= and above.

Dated: Deoghar
Gurupurnima '2000

Swami Suvirananda
Secretary

THE Vedanta Kesari

VOLUME 88 ISSN 0042–2983 MAY 2001

EACH SOUL IS POTENTIALLY DIVINE. THE GOAL IS TO MANIFEST THE DIVINITY WITHIN.

SRI RAMACHARITAMANASA

By Tulasidas

कोउ ब्रह्म निर्गुन ध्याव ।
अब्यक्त जेहि श्रुति गाव ॥
मोहि भाव कोसल भूप ।
श्रीराम सगुन सरूप ॥ ७ ॥

बैदेहि अनुज समेत ।
मम हृदयँ करहु निकेत ॥
मोहि जानिऐ निज दास ।
दे भक्ति रमानिवास ॥ ८ ॥

दे भक्ति रमानिवास
त्रास हरन सरन सुखदायकं ।
सुख धाम राम नमामि
काम अनेक छबि रघुनायकं ॥ ११२ क ॥

सुर बृंद रंजन द्वंद भंजन
मनुज तनु अतुलितबलं ।
ब्रह्मादि संकर सेब्य राम
नमामि करुना कोमलं ॥ ११२ ख ॥

HYMN OF INDRA

Continued from the previous Issue

7. Some people meditate on the attributeless Brahman (the Absolute), whom the Vedas declare as unmanifest. What attracts my mind, however, is the Supreme embodied as Sri Rama, King of Kosala.

8. Together with Videha's daughter and Your younger brother (Lakshmana), therefore, pray abide in my heart; and recognizing me as your own servant, bless me with devotion, O Abode of Rama (Lakshmi).

112(a & b). Grant me devotion to Your feet, O Abode of Rama (Lakshmi), dispeller of fear and solace of the suppliant. I adore You, O blissful Rama, the lord of Raghus, possessing the beauty of a myriad Cupids. Delight of the hosts of heaven, queller of dual experiences (like joy and sorrow), appearing in a human form possessing incomparable strength, worthy of adoration even to Brahma (the creator) and Sankara, O Rama, I bow to You, so lovely through compassion.

LANKA KANDAM CONCLUDED

Inexorable *Prarabdha*

Continued from the previous issue

Can We Overcome *prarabdha*?

There are four well-devised paths or means to reach the spiritual goal. These are known as jnana yoga, raja yoga, karma yoga and bhakti yoga. Doubts creep in one's mind if one confuses one path with another. Sometimes this doubt is responsible for creating untold misery. Sri Krishna says in the *Gita*, '*samshayatma vinashyati*—a doubting man perishes.'[4] It is therefore prudent for an aspirant to read such scriptures that are conducive to his or her chosen path only and stop speaking other words (those which are not connected with one's ideal). It is called *ishtanishtha*, unflinching devotion to one's own chosen ideal. *Anya vachah vimunchatha*—give up all other talks—says the Upanishad.[5] Acharya Shankara also warns us of the adverse effect of reading many books aimlessly: a network of words is like a dense forest which causes the mind to wander hither and thither.[6]

Even in one and the same scripture many different topics may be discussed and ways prescribed to suit the temperaments of different aspirants. One should listen to those injunctions which are essential and efficacious for one's own chosen path. '*Yogi aya yog karaneko, tap karne sannyasi, Hari-bhajanko sadhu aya...*'—the yogis have come to follow the path of yoga, sannyasins (monks) to practise austerity, and the devotees to call on God, Hari. Once Sri Ramakrishna said to a pundit, 'One must take up a definite attitude toward God. Then alone can one realize Him.'[7] The aspirants who have embraced a devotional path are solely dependent on complete surrender to God. So, devotees do not discriminate in the way jnanis do. They surrender their everything to the will of the Lord. They do not care for the law of karma. As a result, they do not unnecessarily strain themselves with considerations of even their own *prarabdha*, what to speak of those of others.

Once a Tantrika (a follower of Tantra) asked Sri Ramakrishna, 'We shall have to reap the result of our past Karma, shall we not?' Sri Ramakrishna replied, 'That may be so. But it is different with the devotees of God. ... The fruit of action does not touch him.'[8] In the Gita, the Lord, having imparted the most secret knowledge for the benefit of His devotees, leaves the choice to Arjuna saying: 'do as you like'. However, He does not leave His devotee in the lurch. So He discloses the secret to Arjuna inspiring him thus,'Take refuge in Him alone with your whole being (with your mind, word and act), O Bharata. Through His grace you will attain the Supreme Peace (the cessation of nescience together with its effects) and the eternal State.'[9] The duty of expiating the karma of devotees, who have surrendered their everything to the Lord, passes on to Him. *The Bible* confirms this: He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.[10]

Shankara, the high priest of Monism, admits that liberation is achieved by the grace of God.[11] In the case of jnanis, their *prarabdha*, with all the stored-up karma, is destroyed at the dawn of knowledge. But the answer Sri Ramakrishna gives quells all qualms about God's intervention in the scheme of *prarabdha*. The following is the conversation between Dr.Sreenath and Sri Ramakrishna:

'Dr.Sreenath: But, sir, how can one escape *prarabdha*, the effect of action performed in previous births?

'Master: No doubt a man experiences a little of the effect; but *much of it is cancelled by*

the power of God's name. A man was born blind of an eye. This was his punishment for a certain misdeed he had committed in his past birth, and the punishment was to remain with him for six more births. He, however, took a bath in the Ganges, which gives one liberation. This meritorious action could not cure his blindness, but it *saved him from his future births.*'[12] It is like burning the candle at both ends—by God's grace the intensity of *prarabdha* will be minimised and the future births also got rid of.

The scriptures also say the same thing: Just as the fluffy tip of a reed placed in fire burns away completely, similarly all one's sins are burnt away.[13] When there is no stored-up karma to trigger off next life, he is saved from transmigration.

For some, the idea of minimising the intensity of *prarabdha,* is debatable. On the authority of the scriptures and of Acharyas Shankara and Ramanuja we may plead in favour of this point. This has been dealt with by both the Acharyas in their commentaries on the *Adhikarana* starting with the Aphorism 3.3.26 of the *Brahma Sutras.* Both of them have quoted the Upanishadic texts (from *Kaushitaki Upanishad* and *Shatyayani Upanishad*) to tell us that when liberation or knowledge is achieved, the aspirant is relieved of the effects, both good and bad, of his or her karmas. The Shruti texts say that the friends of the aspirants (the realized souls) inherit their virtuous deeds and the enemies their vicious deeds. They themselves remain free. When the loads of the *sanchita* (stored-up) and the *kriyamana* (accruing) karmas are released, the situation is equated with the taking off of the propelling rod from the potter's wheel(*kulalachakra*). The sooner we take off the rod the quicker is obtained the decrease in the speed of the wheel! However, it is perfectly compatible with reasoning and the words of the Incarnations of God like Sri Ramakrishna that by His omnipotence, God is capable of minimising the brunt of *prarabdha* for His devotees.

Some More Confusions Addressed

Well, in the case of an individual's *prarabdha* it may sound logical, but what about a collective *prarabdha*? So many people die at a time in accidents, wars, and natural calamities! God does not stop them in any way. How to account for it? Can it be argued that such mass-destructions come to pass due to a collective *prarabdha*? Let us listen to Sri Ramakrishna's answers. Once he said, 'Can a man ever understand God's ways? I too think of God sometimes as good and sometimes as bad. He has kept us deluded by His great illusion.'[14] Again, 'Is it possible to understand God's action and His motive? He creates, He preserves, and He destroys. Can we ever understand why He destroys?'[15] Following Sri Ramakrishna's views, as one diagnoses the question itself, one finds that its inspiration stems from utter irrationality. A collective presence of so many people or their collective enjoyment does not suggest any incongruity in God's deed; neither does the *prarabdha* of those who were absent at the fatal moments evoke in the doubter's mind a sensitive admiration. The doubter is therefore disqualified from pointing his finger at the *prarabdha* of the dead. Then again, one must remember that the destructive power of cyclone, etc., which are called *adhidaivika* afflictions, is a truth, though maybe a relative truth. They happen as a part of natural laws. We have to bear with them, as we bear the cold of winter or the heat of summer. On the other hand, a devotee who believes in God's redeeming power does not bother whether his or her body falls off naturally or due to natural calamities. As He creates and preserves, so He destroys. We cannot resist the temptation of quoting Einstein here. His observation is, 'The truly religious man has no fear of the life and no fear of death—and certainly no blind faith; his faith must be in his conscience.'[16]

There is a story which sets at naught all such doubts about the collective *prarabdha,*

Mother Answers

ON REMOVING EVIL THOUGHTS

Disciple: However much I may try to remove evil thoughts, I do not succeed.

Mother: This is the result of what you have done in your past life. Can one get rid of it by force? Cultivate good company, try to be good, and in time you will succeed. Pray to the Master. I, too, am here.

and challenges our cleverness. Once a batch of ten pilgrims, on their way back from a pilgrimage to holy Kedarnath in the Himalayas, took shelter in an inn at Rishikesh. The sky was overcast in the afternoon, foreboding a heavy downpour any moment. Soon the heavens opened, accompanied with storm and deafening thunder. Lightning began striking the ground all around, fortunately just missing the particular inn every time. 'It may be due to the *prarabdha* of one of us that the lightnings are caused,' so the pilgrims thought. They sat at an urgent meeting and finally decided that they would go out one by one for a few moments to try their lot lest all of them should die simultaneously. When nine of them had uneventfully tried their luck, the real culprit could not remain undetected. All the nine fell upon the poor man and almost threw him out in the open. And lo! no sooner had they done so than a lightning struck the *inn* killing the nine pilgrims *at once*. Was it due to the *prarabdha* of the lone survivor that the rest were safe, or was it due to their *prarabdha* that they were killed? Maybe any one or both of the postulates were true, who knows?

Right; we have understood your clever logic in support of a collective *prarabdha*. Now can you enlighten us about the collective *prarabdha* when as an after effect of a nuclear war all life on earth will just be wiped out and extinguished? What will be God's reaction if His creation is annihilated by unscrupulous people? As to that, we can surmise this much: it will be an absolute collective *prarabdha* only. So the answer is the same. However, God may question us: Who are you to put this question? You are by then dead. If you are talking of a postulate, well, you need not bother about it; it is *My* problem. It will happen only if I will so! Or it will come to pass only when *you* select or elect such insane leaders who will destroy you! As to the second question, it is not a challenge to Me. On the other hand, it is My challenge to you. You should learn that unless you follow religion, the saving voice of your only source, you are going to be punished mortally by yourself for your own mortal sin. Either leave all to the will of God and keep quiet, or take up the rein of everything in your hand and be responsible for anything that happens. Do not deceive yourself only because you are unable to deceive Me.



References

4. Cf. *The Gita*, 4.40.
5. Cf. *The Mundaka Up.* 2.2.5.
6. Cf. *The Vivekachudamani.*
7. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trns. Swami Nikhilananda (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 2000), 610; hereafter cited as the Gospel
8. The Gospel, p.250-1.
9. Cf. *The Gita*, 18.62.
10. Cf. St. Matthew, 8:17.
11. Cf. *The Brahma Sutras*, 2.3.41.
12. The Gospel, p.951.
13. Cf. *The Chhandogya Up.* 5.24.3.
14. The Gospel, p.257.
15. The Gospel, p.161
16. William Hermans, *Einstein and the Poet* (MA: Branden Press, Inc. Brookline Village,1883),65

PREPARATION FOR MANTRA–DIKSHA

(SPIRITUAL INITIATION)

SWAMI BHUTESHANANDA

Continued from the previous issue

Purification of one's conduct is even more important than purification of food. We shall state here the five types of good conduct.

1. We should pray for the welfare of all. We should behave in such a manner that no one's feelings are hurt and no harm is caused to anyone. We must not do anything by which anyone is hurt physically or mentally or whereby evil befalls anyone. The scriptures speak of Ahimsa or non-injury. It not only implies not hurting physically or mentally anyone, it also means not to think ill of others or harm others. This must be practised in thought, word and deed.

2. We must hold on to truth always in such a way that under no circumstance should we deviate from it. We should never have recourse to falsehood. We must honour our commitments. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'One who holds on to truth rests in the lap of God.' He further says, 'Truthfulness is the austerity for Kaliyuga.' I am not saying that it is easy to stick to truth. It is not at all easy. We will have to make a lot of sacrifice in life to observe truthfulness. Hence, it is never an easy job. But we should not forget that holding on to truth is our ideal.

3. Let us not cheat anybody or deceive anybody in any way. Let us not get anything by cheating somebody. Let us be satisfied with what is due. This is honesty in our dealings with others. It is of great help in the spiritual path.

4. We have to bring all our sense organs under our control. Let us not be guided by them. Control over one or two sense organs will not do. All the senses are to be brought under control. It is a must for spiritual life.

5. Life is meant for thinking of God and for realising Him. Lead a simple, straightforward and natural life. We should not seek luxury. I do not mean that all should wear clothes like beggars or live miserably. I mean we should strive to maintain ourselves with minimum requirements. We should be absolutely free from greed. The man who earns thousand rupees a month wants to earn five thousand instead. Another one earning five thousand a month wishes for ten thousand monthly. In a similar fashion others are after a target of one lakh from ten thousand and even one crore from one lakh and so on. This is how our desires are continuously increasing. Such ever increasing cravings keep the mind constantly restless.

Hence it is advised to control the mind. No one's mind feels satisfied or peaceful even after getting all the treasures of the world. That is mind's very nature. The more one gets, the more he wants. Our craving for objects of enjoyment goes on increasing with the supply of objects to the senses just as the addition of clarified butter to fire further kindles it instead of reducing it. These desires cause mental unrest. They confuse the mind too.

Some people say, 'We want peace'. I say, free your mind from desires, you will get peace. As long as desires are there, there will be no peace. For, we nourish so many

desires that it is impossible to satisfy all of them. So the mind gets disturbed. Why don't we get peace? Because our mental desires are not being fulfilled. It is not easy to fulfil all these desires and expectations. While satisfying one desire ten more desires crop up. He who has enough to eat and clothe thinks, 'Do I simply want food and clothing? Is it enough to have mere sustenance? I don't have a scooter and car–no horse-coach!' How then can we enjoy life?

On the contrary, if someone has all the objects of enjoyment, but is physically unfit, he cannot enjoy even with everything available. Hence desires don't subside. King Yayati enjoyed life in all possible ways in his youth. As he became old he no more had the strength to enjoy but he observed that the desire for enjoyment was intact. What to do? He prayed to God, but He said, 'You have passed your youth. All right, if any of your sons agrees to give his youth to you, you will be able to enjoy again.' Yayati called his sons and asked them if they could give him youth. None except Puru, the youngest one, agreed. Getting back his youth Yayati again indulged in sense enjoyments. Then it occurred to him, 'I have enjoyed life for such a long period but the desire for enjoyment has not decreased at all. It is growing all the more just as the flames of fire leap with the addition of fresh fuel. The mental unrest is increasing hundredfold.'

This is human life. We say, we want peace. We also think that we shall get it by praying to God. But we pray to Him only for obtaining objects of sense enjoyment. There is no other need to call on God. If God grants us enough wealth and prosperity, if we can live happily with friends and relatives, we say, 'God is gracious'. On the contrary, if we fall into tragedy, like the falling of a thunderbolt, we label Him as bad. Suppose a young man in the family dies or some such mishap takes place, we say it is a conspiracy of God. We say, 'Look, what has God done!' God loses His credibility. Our main objective in praying to God is to get our desires fulfilled. The moment we fail to get them fulfilled, our devotion vanishes. We can never have peace of mind through contemplation of God with such an attitude. Whether He keeps us in happiness or misery, does us favour or disfavour, under all circumstances we must accept all as His benign will. We must accept happiness or misery, whatever comes to our lot, with willingness. We should receive them with a grateful heart. We should not only not dread death, we should accept and welcome it without the least resentment. Such an attitude comes from self-surrender. It is written in the scriptures: he who has been able to surrender himself gets peace of mind. All the sense objects and enjoyments of the world become insignificant to him who wants God from the core of his heart. As a result of constant remembrance of Him his mind becomes so much concentrated on God that it loses attraction for everything else, just as the man who has a philosopher's stone in his possession does not care for petty things. Other objects of enjoyment become insignificant.

Rabindranath Tagore has depicted a beautiful incident in his poem *Sparshamani* (literally meaning 'philosopher's stone'). A poor brahmin used to worship Lord Shiva with a desire to become wealthy. The Lord said, 'Go to Vrindavan, meet Sri Sanatana Goswami there and learn from him how to get wealth.' The brahmin went to Sri Sanatana Goswami with the hope of getting rid of poverty. Sri Sanatana said, pointing out a particular spot on the bank of a river, 'Under the sand a philosopher's stone is embedded. Dig it out and take it. All your poverty will be removed and you will get infinite wealth.' The brahmin hastily dug the spot and obtained the stone. The moment he touched his iron amulet with it, it instantly turned the amulet into one of

gold. Astonished, the brahmin now thought that in spite of such a precious object close by, how undisturbed was the Goswami. He went to Sanata and asked, 'Please give me a fraction of that treasure, having which you don't consider this precious stone as precious.' Saying this, the brahmin threw away the philosopher's stone into the river.

In the words of Rabindranath:

'Je dhane hoiya dhanee,
manire manona mani,
tahari khanik,
Magi ami natosheere,'
eto bali nadineere felilo manik.

Srimad Bhagavatam (11/2/53) says:

> That person of confirmed faith and experience is the greatest among the devotees of Vishnu, whom all the wealth and resources of the three worlds will not detract even for a trice from his firm grasp of the holy feet of his Lord, which is yet only a distant aspiration even for celestials seeking it.

He becomes so contented with the joy of communion with God that all worldly possessions and treasures become insignificant for him.

Here it must be noted that this dispassion for everything worldly has not to come out of disgust following failures or blows. The attraction for God is so strong that everything else becomes insignificant. Sri Ramakrishna has given the illustration of the attraction of iron by a magnet. If two magnets, one small and the other big, are placed on the two sides of a piece of iron, which magnet would pull the piece of iron? The bigger one, for sure. God is the biggest magnet, as it were. His attraction is irresistible. When once His attraction is experienced, then nothing of the world will be able to attract the mind any more. Then nothing can take us away from His lotus feet. Our progress towards the Lord is also the test of attraction for Him. If we want God as well as worldly riches, then it means that our love for God is a mere pretence.

Generally people remember God with the intention of getting wealth and happiness. They do not want Him for His own sake. Our real objective is wealth and prosperity. And God is one of the means of acquiring them. If the means does not work up to our expectation, we do not hesitate to throw that means away. In other words, we shall give up even God! We must remember that to get only happiness from God is an impossibility. Misery, poverty, obstacles, accidents also come from Him only. People just forget God in their happy days but remember Him when they are in trouble. While others go on lamenting in distress, a devotee holds on to Him all the more firmly in such a situation. He remembers Him more intensely in the midst of suffering. We know the life of Kunti. Her entire life was filled with continuous suffering. She roamed about from one forest to another with her husband. Then her husband died and she came to Hastinapura with her minor children. Even after getting the kingdom the Pandavas, her sons, were deprived of it by the conspiracy of the Kauravas. This was followed by Pandavas' long life in the forest

The name of God has very great sanctity. It may not produce an immediate result, but one day it must bear fruit. It is like a seed that has been left on the cornice of a building. After many days the house crumbles, and the seed falls on the earth, germinates, and at last bears fruit. —SRI CHAITANYA

and one year of anonymity. Next they had to roam about in the forest with the mother. Kunti led almost the whole of her life in danger and suffering. Then came the war of Kurukshetra. At the end of the Kurukshetra war when Sri Krishna came to take leave of her, she prayed to Him, 'O Madhava, when we are in the midst of happiness we forget you. But we invariably remember you in danger. I therefore beg sufferings from you so that I may remember you constantly.' How large must be the heart to ask for suffering from God? Although such prayers are rare amongst us, we must not forget that such prayers alone are the ideal ones.

We simply mutter the name of God verbally but remain steeped in worldliness. We ought to seek Him because He is our greatest benefactor under all circumstances, our all in all, the Soul of our Soul, nay, our very Real Nature. Man loves himself the most. He loves other objects because they are dear to the Atman. In other words man loves Atman alone. It is from this standpoint that God is called Paramatman, i.e., Atman of one's atman. We should love God because He is our true Self and not for any other reason. This is called *ahaituki bhakti*, unselfish devotion. Sri Ramakrishna has talked about this type of bhakti time and again. The devotee in this kind of devotion does not seek anything from God because he has no other cravings. He feels completely satisfied by whole hearted surrender to God with love and devotion, without seeking anything in return. Such an ideal devotion towards God is the ideal of Sri Ramakrishna. If we fail to raise ourselves to such a high level, we should at least remember that thirst for worldly possessions and sense pleasures should not be allowed to shift our attention from God, the centre of our life. Petty desires will be there, body and mind would like to fulfil them. Let them be and let them do it, but they should not cloud our power of judgement to such an extent that we forget God and make enjoyment and worldly possessions as the very purpose of life.

Another key point in Sri Ramakrishna's teachings is that we should be sincere in repeating the name of God. It is not important how many thousand times we chanted the name of God or how long we meditated. Someone may eat vegetarian diet and undertake severe austerities wearing a single piece of cloth and so on. These are of least importance if they lack sincerity of purpose. The important thing is whether we are able to love God wholeheartedly. Due to such a love for God, all other worldly attractions would fade into insignificance. We should always keep it in mind.

Srimad Bhagavatam says, 'A genuine love for God reduces all other attractions of the world.' We are to tread the spiritual path with this standard. One may lose consciousness while singing of God, one may meditate the whole life sitting in one place, one may perform lakhs of japam for years, one can go on pilgrimages one after another. None of these really matter. Feeling the constant presence of God in our heart is what really matters. There will be no space left for anything else, or any other person or even any other thought in such a heart. We ought to offer all our love and adoration to Him. We shall have to surrender ourselves completely at His feet. This is the gist of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual teachings.

And if we succeed in loving God with our whole heart, we will be able to feel His presence in all the creatures of this universe. I sincerely pray that all of us may be able to live our lives holding fast to this ideal. May this ideal influence our lives to such an extent that everything of the world becomes insignificant. By His grace everything is possible. I pray to Sri Ramakrishna that all of us may have such intense love for God.

Concluded

THE DECIPHERMENT OF THE INDUS SCRIPT AND THE VEDIC CIVILIZATION

SWAMI MUKHYANANDA

In the issue of *The Statesman* of 4th November 2000 appeared a write-up by Shri Sharad K. Soni on 'Unlocking the Harappan Mystery', giving an account of Shri Dhanpal (Dhanpat?) Singh Dhania's claims of deciphering the Harappan (Indus) Script.

'You cannot just claim to have deciphered a language which is as complex as the Harappan script. There has to be authenticated proof, only then can a claim be accepted' says, Dr. R.S. Bisht, Director (Excavations and Explorations), Archaeological Survey of India. Dhania contends, 'Indus Valley people spoke *Van* which is generally considered the mother of Sanskrit language. I am the only person in the world who can read, write, and speak the language.' 'Since nobody knows the Indus Valley language, who will authenticate my claim?' questions Dhania.

This is a strange way of putting forth a claim. The flaw in his argument lies here: if one deciphers an unknown ancient script, he must reveal the methodology by which he has deciphered it. He must give systematically the character and phonetic values of the various letters and symbols of the script, their composition, and the methodology of reading it which will enable any competent person to read the writing on the seals. The language of the script cannot be simply assumed; it has to be arrived at with reference to the ancient history and shown if it has any connection or relationship with the ancient Vedic Sanskrit, authenticate it with references, and confirm it with a good number of examples of reading the seals with their meanings. The whole effort must be orderly and systematic and it must also evaluate the previous efforts of others in the field, showing their merits and demerits, and explaining where they went wrong.

There are also some factual mistakes and ambiguities in the write-up: a) The number of seals unearthed is nearly 4000 and not 2500-odd; b) Wherefrom Mr. Dhania got the idea that the unheard of *Van* is considered the mother of the Sanskrit language (p. 1) is not clear, and that the seals are in the *Van* script (p. 3) is an unsubstantiated assumption; c) Further, the ancient scripts of *Brahmi* and *Kharoshti* have been mentioned as *Brahma* and *Khrasto* (p. 1); d) Nowhere has Dr. Natwar Jha mentioned that the language of the seals is a mix of Sanskrit and Tamil (p. 3). Dr. Jha has demonstrated clearly in his works that it is Vedic Sanskrit. Mahadevan, who is mentioned as Madhavan, in his work *The Indus Script—Texts, Concordance, and Tables* (Archaeological Survey of India, 1977), has not referred to any language of the seals, but says, 'The problem of the decipherment of the Indus Script is beyond the scope of the present work.'

All the above factors show the shoddiness of the claims of Shri Dhania. Neither Shri Soni nor Shri Dhania seem to be aware of the several systematic efforts in the direction of the decipherment of the Harappan or Indus Script in recent times by: 1) Shri M.V. Krishna Rao (*Indus Script Deciphered*; Agam Kala Prakashan, Delhi, 1982; 2) Dr. S.R. Rao, one of the world's foremost archaeologists, who excavated the great harbour

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of Lothal, (*The Decipherment of the Indus Script*; Asia Publishing, Bombay, 1982). Both these are systematic efforts as far as they go and are in the right direction, though not quite satisfactory. An article on '*Indus Script Deciphered*' by Dr. S.R. Rao, with illustrations and examples, appeared in the *Bhavan's Journal*, Mumbai, in its issue of March 16, 1981. The Editor of the Journal comments, 'In this exclusive article, the celebrated archaeologist emphasizes the need for rewriting Indian history. He says that the theory of Dravidian authorship of Indus Civilization and its destruction by invading Aryans was advanced by Western scholars who wanted to keep the Indian people divided by driving a wedge between the 'Southerners' and 'Northerners'.'

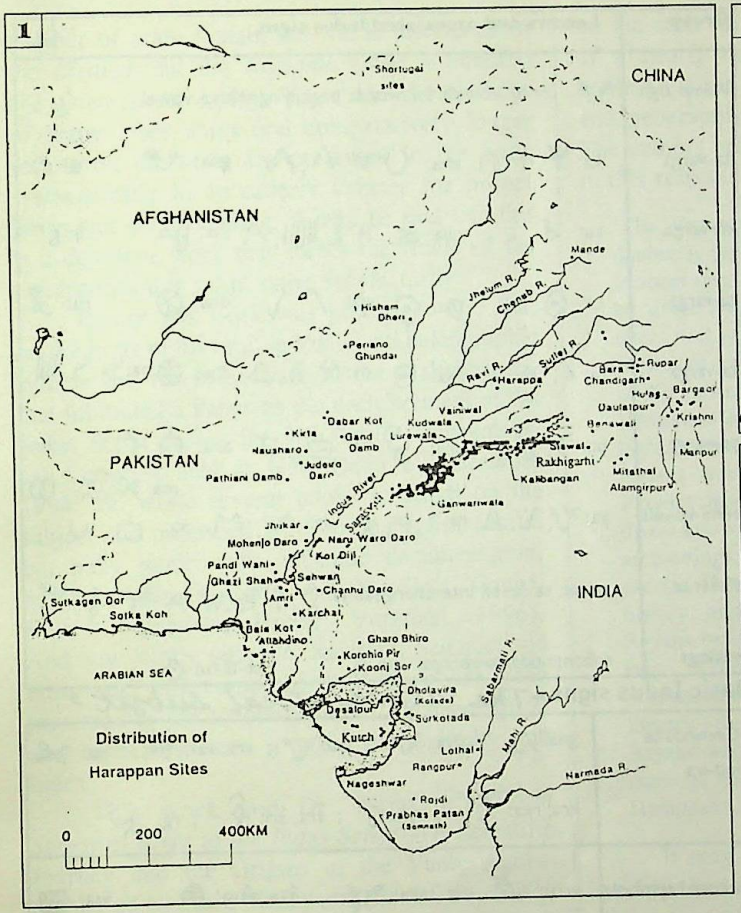
In fact the myth of 'Aryan Invasion' has been shattered beyond recovery by thoroughly documented recent works by David Frawley, Subhash Kak, Dr. N.S. Rajaram, Srikant Talageri, Jim Shaffer, Bhagawan Singh, and several others. Only the ignorant and those with some motives hold on to it now. Several of these authors have also clearly shown that Tamil, which emerged as a literary language in the first millennium B.C., and uses a script derived from the *Brahmi* script has absolutely no connection with the ancient Indus Script. Rather than Invasion, it is now forcefully established that the Vedic people migrated in waves to the West Asian countries and Turkey, and even to Europe. F.E. Pargiter, the noted foremost Western student of the Puranas, after a thorough study, declared in his work (1922) that there was an outflow of people from India before the 15th century B.C.

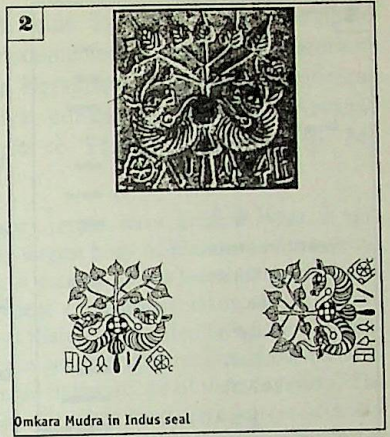
The Aryan Invasion theory was based merely on the cognateness of Sanskrit and Indo-European languages, guided by missionary and colonial interests, and not on any substantiated literary or archaeological evidence. When the theory was propagated only Mohenjodaro and Harappa were known. But now more than a thousand sites, spread over nearly one and half million Sq. k.m.—from the borders of Iran up to Eastern Uttar Pradesh and from the Punjab up to the Godavari River Valley in Maharashtra—have been excavated with many important ones like the sophisticated harbour sites at Lothal and Dholavira in Gujarat, and Rangpur, Kalibangan, Kunal, and others.

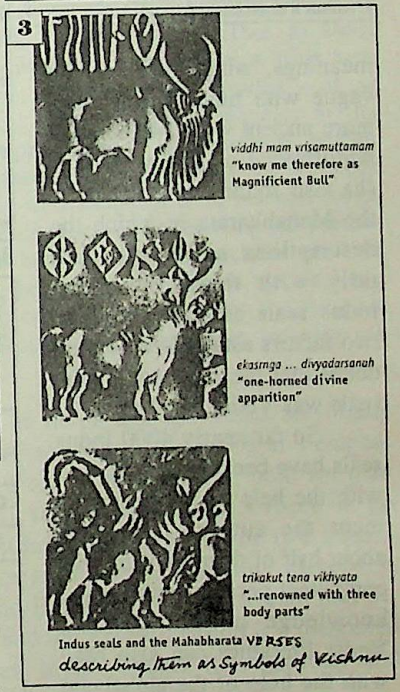
The rediscovery of the very wide dry bed and channels of the mighty Vedic River Sarasvati has been a great event and a turning point regarding the chronology of the Vedic Age, besides astronomical data in the Vedas, which take us beyond the Harappan period. A great number of important sites are in the ancient Sarasvati Valley, far more than those in the Indus Valley, and are pre-Harppan (*Illustration No.1*). Numerous settlements have been found along its course in Haryana and Rajasthan and at places like Karnal, Jind, Somjat, Rohtak, Bhiwani, Mahendragarh, Gurgaon, Hissar, Kapurthala, Hanumangarh, and several others. These are exactly the places that would be flourishing in the Vedic Age, to go by Vedic accounts. What is more, Vedic sacrificial altars have been found at many places.

The latest and greatest work in the field of decipherment, which evaluates and benefits from all these earlier works, is, 'The Deciphered Indus Script' by Dr. Natwar Jha (Principal of Kendriya Vidyalaya, Farakka, W.B.—a great Vedic scholar and paleographer) and Dr. N.S. Rajaram (A scientist working on the history and science of ancient India), with profuse illustrations and examples (published by Aditya Prakashan, New Delhi, 2000, price Rs.950).

Both have several books and articles related to the ancient history of the Vedic region and the excavated seals and Indus script, and their relation to the vast Vedic literature. The present work is a thorough study of the subject in all its aspects in a historical perspective. It discusses and meets all the questions that arise and presents a reliable decipherment methodology which enables any competent person with a good knowledge of Sanskrit and Vedic literature to read. The authors have examined the various earlier efforts at decipherment and their merits, and have shown why and where they failed to achieve complete success. Approaching the subject in a scientific and systematic manner, they



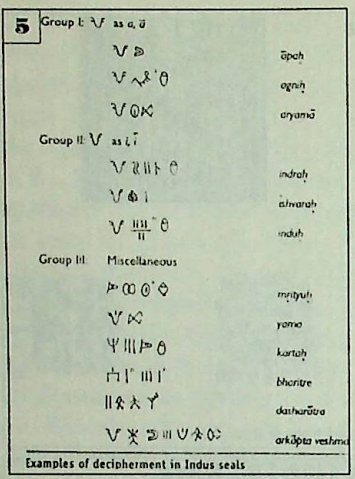




have examined the subject in all its bearings with the help of the Vedic and other allied ancient Sanskrit literature and paleography, and various ancient scripts such as the Phoenician, Aramaic, and Ashokan Brahmi, which reveal significant influence of the Indus Script. And this is far older than all these (3000 B.C.). The Indus Script can even be termed as Proto-Brahmi.

The authors have been able to give a keyboard of the basic alphabetic subset with associated signs of the Indus Script with their phonetic values and have shown its special characteristics in the formation of words, composite letters and conjunct consonants, the nature of vowels and their use, and the use of symbolism and their meanings, in every detail and with illustrations. They have given the readings of over 600 seals in the work as examples, with their meanings and Vedic contexts. They have noticed that in some respects the formation of words and writing follow the rules and prescriptions in the ancient Vedic grammar.

All this has been possible because, fortunately, while studying the ancient *Mahabharata*, Dr. Jha came across descriptions as to how Yaska, the ancient Vedic etymologist, '*unearthed*' the lost ancient script or science and compiled a work called *Nirukta* with a list of ancient Vedic words giving their



Examples of decipherment in Indus seals

meanings, which had become vague with time, basing on a more ancient work *Nighantuka-padakhyana* of Kashyapa. Dr. Jha also found some verses in the Mahabharata in which the descriptions and symbolism tally with three important Indus seals admirably. These two factors established beyond doubt that the language of the seals was Vedic Sanskrit.

So far nearly 4000 Indus seals have been unearthed, and with the help of the decipherment the authors have read about half of them, which other competent persons with a good knowledge of Sanskrit and Vedic literature can also read with the help of the alphabetic subset and other associated signs and symbols of the Indus seals given in the work and the methodology presented in all detail. Confirming the correctness of the decipherment, it was found that a good

Group	Letters and associated Indus signs	4
Vowel sign	for all vowels for words beginning with a vowel	
ka-varga	ka: kha: ga: gha: ng:	
ca-varga	ca: cha: ja: jha: nj:	
ta-varga	ṭa: ṭha: ḍa: ḍha: na:	
ta-varga	ta: tha: da: dha: na:	
pa-varga	pa: pha: ba: bha: ma:	
semi-vowels	ya: ra: la: va:	
sibilants	sa, ṣa, śa (used interchangeably): ha:	
endings	*subanta-tidanta-visarga:* su: te-ti-tu:	

Basic Indus signs — The 'alphabetical subset'

Composite letters	gna: ; dya: ; tya: ; vra, var: : tta: kra, rka: ; rya: ; śra, śri: ; ṛg:
Pictorial symbols	vrish: ; saka: ; śya, áśva: ; ksa:

Common composite signs and pictorial symbols

SYMBOLS	DECIPHERMENT	INTERPRETATION
	sa-ma-dha	*samādhi*: a technical term in the *Sulba-sutras* meaning 'proof'
	pa-ka-ma	pa: *paradhi vyāsa anupati* = π ka: *karṇi* = √ (square root) ma: 10
	pa-pa-ta	Formula π = √10 (approximate)
	ka-vaṃ-eka	*dvipa-tijya* or formula 2 π r *kami-ekavimsat* or √21
	vṛ-gna-ya-ra-pa	*vrittāgnaye-rūpa* or a statement about transforming figures into circles.

Mathematical formulas from the *Sulbasutras* on the Indus seals

THE VEDAS ARE, IN FACT, THE OLDEST SACRED BOOKS IN THE WORLD. —SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

number of seals contain the words mentioned in the *Nirukta* and the *Nighantu* (over a hundred are given in the work). These and the readings of many other short and comparatively longer scripts on the seals are presented in the book systematically in an orderly manner for proper grasp and understanding. It may be said that this is a *definitive* work that solves the riddle of the Harappan/Indus script quite satisfactorily.

Before this work was produced, Dr. Jha, on the basis of his erudite Vedic and paleographic studies and the discoveries in the Mahabharata, had submitted a Paper on the decipherment of the Indus Script during the 3rd World Archaeological Congress held at New Delhi in December 1994. He wrote several books in Hindi on the subject and published in 1996 in English a brief but pithy work, with authentic documentation, entitled *Vedic Glossary on Indus Seals* (Ganga-Kaveri Publishing House, Varanasi, 1996). And now jointly with Dr. Rajaram, Scientist and Historian, this comprehensive work has been presented to the scholarly world, archaeologists, and historians, with a good Bibliography and Index.

This work and Dr. Rajaram's *From Sarasvati River to the Indus Script*—(A Scientific Journey into the Origins of the Vedic Age)—(published by Mitra Madhyama, Bangalore, 1999), as well as those of Shri M.V. Krishna Rao and Dr. S.R. Rao, and several others mentioned above, and *The Vedic Harappans*, an erudite work by Bhagawan Singh (Aditya Prakashan, New Delhi, 1995), clearly establish that the language of the Indus seals is Vedic Sanskrit, and that the Harappan civilization was the continuation of the Vedic civilization. Excavations at Dholavira, a major Harappan site in the Rann of Kutch, under the direction of R.S. Bisht, have revealed a planned city going back to 3500 B.C. Bisht concludes that the Harappan civilization was created by the Vedic Aryans of the Sarasvati heartland.

A major and highly salutary result of these recent works, which show that the Harappan civilization is only a continuation of the Vedic civilization and that the language of the script on the seals is Vedic Sanskrit, is the emergence of a clearly documented literary and historical context for the Harappans and an archaeological and geographical context to the Vedic Aryans. The authors refer to 'Frawley's Paradox' (p. 24) in this respect:

> 'The Vedantic Aryans have created what is undoubtedly the largest body of literature of antiquity. In sheer size, it exceeds all the literature put together by other ancient civilizations taken several times over. And yet there is (supposed to be) no archaeological or even geographical record of the creators of this immense literature, or of their Invasion. The Harappans on the other hand have left us archaeological remains that are also most extensive in the ancient world, but no literature. This, as David Frawley has pointed out, introduces a great paradox—known as 'Frawley's Paradox'—of an archaeological history without a literature for the literate Harappans and a vast literature without history, archaeology, or geography for the Vedic Aryans (who were supposed to be nomadic invaders). ... The simplest way of resolving this paradox is to attribute both achievements—archaeological and literary—to the same people. These are the Vedic Aryans who created both the Vedas and the great material civilization of the people we now call Harappans.'

It may be noted that the Vedas are highly positive and integral in their outlook and emphasize on an all round development, both spiritual and material, sacred and secular. There is no dichotomy. It holds that they are the two aspects of one and the same Supreme Reality. Moreover, the Vedic and Harappan periods overlap and are continuous, and the Aryan Invasion is a disproved and shattered Myth. Unlike the Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations, which became extinct, the Vedic civilization has a continuous existence to the present day amidst ups and downs.



Indus Valley civilization is the Cinderella of the ancient World. GEOFFREY BIBBY

Ramanuja: the Compassionate

SHAMIL VAYOT

Introduction: Goshthipurna, one of the disciples of the great Sri Vaishnava teacher Yamunacharya, gave a secret mantra to one of his disciples. The serene face of the young disciple was aglow with a deep compassion. He asked the teacher, 'Sir, I have heard the mantra. What will happen to me?' The loving teacher replied, 'You will be liberated!' 'What if I disclose it to others?' the teacher was accosted by his disciple. 'You will go to hell,' replied the teacher. The young disciple could not wait for a moment; he started running, calling all from both sides of the road, until he reached the temple. He climbed upon the high gates of the Vishnu Temple at Goshthipura near Srirangam and shouted the mantra to the multitude who followed him there. It was the liberating mantra '*Om Namo Narayanaya*'. The news reached Goshthipurna. Enraged, he sent for the disobedient disciple. 'Why did you disclose the mantra?' asked the furious teacher. Out came the gentle but assuring answer, 'It is because so many poor souls will be liberated, no matter if an insignificant creature like me goes to hell.' Goshthipurna was startled at the compassion of the disciple. He embraced the young man who was later to become the famous Ramanuja, the brightest Acharya the Vishishtadvaita[1] tradition has ever seen.

His Life: When writing a life of Ramanuja one faces the problem that biographical material about him is scanty, especially when we consider the fact that Ramanuja lived until the age of one hundred and twenty. But we do have the essential facts about his life along with many interesting and a few painful episodes with which a life story can be prepared. Among the great teachers of mankind, we have geniuses like Socrates and Ramakrishna, who wrote nothing; and we have teachers like Plato and Shankara, who dazzled the world by their scholarship. Ramanuja evidently belongs to the latter category of men.

Ramanuja was born in the year 1017 A.D., at the village Sriperumbudur, in the state of Tamil Nadu, to Kantimati and Asuri Kesavacharya. Kesavacharya was an adept in the performance of *Yajnas* and the *pundits* of his place conferred the appellation 'sarvakratu' on him. Sarvakratu means the performer of all *Yajnas*. It is said that Kesavacharya and Kantimati did not have a child for a long time. So they performed *Yajnas* on the banks of Tiruallikeni (the lily-lake of Parthasarathi). This place is in Chennai and is known as Triplicane today. The name Triplicane is an English corruption of Tiruallikeni which is a compound of Tiru=Sri, Alli=Lily, and Keni=Lake. Thus the famous Parthasarathi temple in Chennai is intimately associated with Ramanuja's birth.

Kantimati's brother, Sailapurna, was one of the chief disciples of the great Vishishtadvaita preceptor, Yamunacharya (Alavandar). Sailapurna was delighted at the sight of Kantimati's baby boy for the boy had various divine signs which indicated that he was the messiah of Sri-Vaishnavism. In the school, Ramanuja was discovered as

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a child prodigy. He became the darling of his teachers. Sailapurna himself looked after Ramanuja's preliminary studies. Ramanuja's great intellectual capacity was combined with an equally great yearning for virtue and wisdom; he missed no opportunity of associating with religious men.

At the age of sixteen Ramanuja married a girl chosen by his parents. A month after the marriage his father passed away and soon the family shifted to the holy city of Kanchipuram. In Kanchipuram he became a disciple of the renowned Advaita teacher, Yadavaprakasa. The abstruse logic and the formless impersonal Brahman of Advaita did not impress Ramanuja. He disagreed with Yadavaprakasa's advaitic interpretation of Upanishadic passages, which, according to him, give a dualistic meaning. For instance, in explaining the mantra '*satyam jnanam anantam brahma*,' Yadavaprakasa held that Brahman is Truth, Intelligence and Infinitude. Ramanuja objected to this interpretation and explained it as follows: 'Brahman is endowed with the quality of truth, and not with untruth; intelligence is His attribute, not nescience; He is infinite, not finite. That is to say He is endowed with the qualities of truth, intelligence and infinitude. It is by no means reasonable to hold that all these qualities are It Itself. These are His, but not He, (or technically, It), even as the body is mine, I am not the body'. On such occasions Yadavaprakasa found himself at his wit's end and felt hurt. In his attitude to Yadavaprakasa Ramanuja was like Aristotle, who held Plato dear, but truth dearer. But Yadavaprakasa was no noble soul like Plato. This ignoble teacher summoned some of his disciples and plotted to murder the gentle Ramanuja. The plan was to persuade him to accompany them on a pilgrimage to Kashi and to get rid of him on the way. By the grace of God, the news of this heinous plot reached Ramanuja's ears. He escaped from the trip at the right time and returned home.

Like his teacher, though not so dangerous, his wife too turned out to be a source of pain. She was a haughty lady who applied her notions of caste and rank even to saints. Fed up with her insensitivity to show proper respect to holy men, and her penchant for picking up quarrels with some of his esteemed guests, Ramanuja sent her back to her father's house.

Now he donned the robes of a sannyasi and renounced family life. The great Yamunacharya (Alavandar) had seen Ramanuja during one of his visits to Kanchi. He was struck by Ramanuja's saintly aura and knew that Ramanuja was the fittest person to succeed him as the leader of his faith. However, Yamunacharya never made a personal request to Ramanuja about the matter. He knew that God would take care of everything. Towards the end of his life he despatched Mahapurna to Kanchi with the express purpose of bringing Ramanuja to Srirangam in order to initiate him into the Sri Vaishnava faith and to groom him for the leadership of the Sri Vaishnava community. Ramanuja gladly agreed to accompany Mahapurna. They duly reached the northern bank of Kaveri river, where, to their astonishment, they saw the funeral procession of Yamunacharya approaching. Ramanuja hastened to have a look at the body of the great Guru and was surprised to see that three of the fingers of the dead saint's right hand were closed firmly. He asked the bystanders if they were usually so. They replied that shortly before his death, the venerable teacher had expressed three wishes and had closed his fingers in the act of counting them.

The wishes were: (i) a Vishishtadvaita *bhashya* (commentary) should be written on Vyasa's *Brahma-Sutra*. (ii) two suitable persons to be named after the great Vedavyasa and Parasara as a mark of respect to them. (iii) homage to be paid to Nammalvar by arranging for a commentary to be written

The Master Teaches

ON BUDDHA

I have heard a great deal about Buddha. He is one of the ten Incarnations of God. Brahman is immovable, immutable, inactive, and of the nature of Consciousness. When a man merges his buddhi, his intelligence, in Bodha, Consciousness, then he attains the Knowledge of Brahman; he becomes Buddha, enlightened.

Why atheist? He was not an atheist. He simply could not express his inner experiences in words. Do you know what 'Buddha' means? It is to become one with Bodha, Pure Intelligence, by meditating on that which is of the nature of Pure Intelligence; is to become Pure Intelligence Itself.

Why should Buddha be called an atheist? When one realizes Svarupa, the true nature of one's Self, one attains a state that is something between asti, is, and nasti, is-not. ... This 'existence' and 'non existence' are attributes of Prakriti. The Reality is beyond both.

Buddha is an Incarnation of God. How can you compare him to anybody else? As he is great, so too is his teaching great. —*Retold by a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna*

on the Alvar's hymns, *Tiruvai Mozhi*. In short, Alavandar wished to protect and propagate Sri Vaishnava religion properly. Then and there Ramanuja solemnly proclaimed that he would do everything in his powers to fulfil the wishes of the great preceptor. No sooner had he made this promise than the fingers opened out by themselves. The assembled Vaishnavas had an inkling of the greatness of Sri Ramanuja. Later on he fulfilled all the wishes of Alavandar in the most fitting fashion.

Returning to Kanchipuram Ramanuja resumed his duties under the loving care and affection of the pious Kanchipurna. Yamunacharya's death had left a vacuum at Srirangam and they were anxious to fill the place. Mahapurna brought Ramanuja to Srirangam. In Srirangam Ramanuja studied patiently under various teachers, who were disciples of the late Yamunacharya. They now taught him everything that their teacher had specially asked them to teach Ramanuja. Ramanuja became the leader of their community, learning and teaching at the same time. Hundreds of eminent men and women surrounded him and hung upon his words. He managed the affairs of the Srirangam temple with great care and ability; gave instructions to his followers and propounded to his disciples the philosophy of Vishishtadvaita in his inimitable humble manner. It is said that his congregation at Srirangam included 700 Sannyasins, 74 dignitaries holding special offices of ministry, and innumerable holy men and women who revered him as Divine. But Ramanuja, by himself was most humble, full of forgiveness and grace.

Ramanuja and his disciples had to leave Srirangam during the reign of the Chola King Krimikantha. This King was a Shaiva fanatic who made it his mission to persecute Vaishnavas. His men plucked out the eyes of Ramanuja's dearest disciple, Kuresa, at the King's behest. Kuresa's fault was that he sang the glories of Lord Vishnu in the King's presence. In saintliness Kuresa was the very image of his beloved master, Ramanuja.

During his exile, Ramanuja converted the Jain King Bitti Deva of the Hoysala

dynasty into Sri Vaishnavism. He gave the king the name Vishnuvardhana. Along with their King, thousands of Jains gave up their old faith and accepted Vaishnavism. Ramanuja stayed in Mysore for more than twenty years. He succeeded in creating a strong and learned Vaishnava community there. He built the temple of Vishnu at Melkote or Tirunarayanapuram, a few miles north of Mysore. He went to Padmagiri (Sravanabelgola), the Buddhist stronghold and defeated the Buddhists in arguments and converted a large number of them into Vaishnavism. When he left Mysore, his followers bade him a moving farewell after making an exact image of Sri Ramanuja which they set up for worship. The tyrant Krimikanta died of some incurable disease and it was now safe for Ramanuja to go back to Srirangam.

Ramanuja's campaign of conquest is awe-inspiring. In Kumbakonam he defeated the local scholars in dialectics on the *Shashtras* and converted many of them into Vaishnavism. At Madurai he held an exposition of the Dravida-Prabandha-Mala before an assembly of scholars all of whom adopted the Vishishtadvaita doctrine. He visited the Padmanabhaswami temple in Trivandrum and embarked on an all-India tour. He went to Dwaraka, Mathura, Vrindaban, Shala gram, Saketa, Badarikashrama, Naimisha, Pushkara and the Saradapitha in Kashmir. The King of Kashmir and the scholars of his court became his disciples. From Kashmir he went to Kashi, where he lived for a while and gathered many philosophers and scholars into his fold. He founded a monastery in Puri and named it Embar Math after his dear disciple and cousin, Govinda. On his journey to the south from Puri, he visited the temple of Kurmadeva, in Kurmakshetra, Simhachala, and the Ahobila temple on Garuda mountain where he established a monastery. From there he went to Ishaliganga and worshipped Sri Nrisimhadeva and proceeded to the hallowed Tirupati. At that time a dispute was going on in Tirupati whether Vishnu or Shiva is the Deity of Tirupati. Ramanuja settled the dispute once and for all by establishing that Vishnu indeed is the Deity of Tirupati. From Tirupati he reached Kanchipuram and had *darshan* of Lord Varadaraja. He then visited Madurantakam and Viranarayanapuram which is the birth place of Nathamuni and finally returned to Srirangam.

At Srirangam Ramanuja spent his final years, full of age and wisdom, instructing disciples, blessing devotees and worshipping Lord Ranganatha, the upholder of Dharma. He passed away quietly at Srirangam in the year 1137 A.D., at the ripe old age of one hundred and twenty years.

We shall always remember him for the heroic attempt he made to unite personal theism with the philosophy of the Absolute. Like the Sangam at Allahabad, knowledge, work, and devotion met in Ramanuja. His life and teachings will continue to transform the hearts of men, irrespective of class, colour, creed or caste. His message to mankind is to give up selfishness, which is the enemy of true life, and to love the Creator and His creations unconditionally because He is all and all is from Him. The noble Kuresa sang (*Vaikuntha Stava*):

Yo nityamachyutapadambujayugma—
Vyamohatastaditarani trinaya mene
Asmadgurorbhagavatosya dayaikasindhoh
Ramanujasya charanam sharanam prapadye

I take refuge at the feet of Sri Ramanuja, our venerable teacher, the unparalleled ocean of compassion; who prompted by an impassioned desire for the precious wealth of the lotus feet of the Lord viewed every other thing as mere straw.



Note: 1. The term Visishtadvaita was not used either by Sri Ramanuja or the Acharyas preceding him. The philosophy and cult are properly addressed as Sri Vaishnavism, wherein Sri (Lakshmi) is given the same importance as Vishnu. But in popular usage Visishtadvaita has come to stay. —*Editor*

WHAT SAMKHYANS TEACH US

SWAMI SUNIRMALANANDA

Every single sentence that a saint speaks is important and contains a deep meaning. In Swami Saradananda's *The Essence of the Gita* (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2000), there is a wonderful statement (p. 66): 'The sage Kapila, the father of the Samkhya philosophy, says that the creation of the world is an amazing enterprise of nature (*Prakriti*) designed specifically to make the Self (*Purusha*) realize its own glory.'

We in our present state of mind can't see or understand Purusha or Prakriti. But we can see that the sentence is directly addressed to us ordinary people. So let us read the sentence from our standpoint. We shall then discover something extraordinary in it.

I

We perceive so many things in the world. The world is such an attractive place that at every turn we see something beautiful and interesting. We enjoy the beauty of the world around us. But, not satisfied with what we see around us, we wish to see more. So we take the earliest opportunity to book tickets to travel to different places of interest whenever we get leave. We go on long tours, see monuments and natural scenarios, enjoy the delicacies of those places, and return with great joy. This joy, however, is there for a few days only, because we are eager to visit some more places the next time. Nothing quenches our thirst. We feel that if we miss visiting some important tourist attraction, our life is wasted. 'That place is meant for us only,' we think. The same is the case with movies, TV programmes, books, etc.

Then comes hearing. Numerous cassettes and CDs are being released every day. We read reports and reviews about new releases and buy as many as possible. But our desire to listen somehow appears to be insatiable. When we hear that some famous singer or artiste performed the previous night and we didn't go there, we feel as if we have lost something great. The same, again, is the case with listening to famous speakers, and so on, but not listening to the song of birds. Where are birds in cities today?

The question of food is better left untouched. I don't mean to say we are gluttons, but somehow we can't be satisfied with anything we eat. Satiation is difficult when it comes to the tongue. Let alone newer and newer items that are prepared, even ordinary things prepared a few days back will attract us immensely when prepared some days later. There are some things—like the potato for certain races, for instance—which may be termed *chiranutanam*—eternally new. The more we eat them, the more they appear tasty. Having eaten them a few hours back is of no consequence at all—we want more now!

So far as touch is concerned, all our life we have been enjoying the pleasant experience of soft touch, but still we keep on searching for softer things. And smell? The best incense of the world or the best fragrance ever produced will become stale a few days later. We seek newer ones.

Thus we think that the world has been made for us alone; that we are here to enjoy the world to the fullest extent; that without enjoying the world to the maximum we are not only depriving ourselves of the joy of it, but depriving the world too of a grand opportunity of serving us!

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So when Swami Saradananda remarks that the world has been created for the glorification of Purusha, we literally imagine that we are all Purushas, and the world is meant for our glorification.

But is this true?

II

We have made only one terrible mistake in assuming that we are Purushas and that the world or Prakriti is meant to give us enjoyment. What is that mistake? We are suffering from a problem called mistaken identity. We are calling ourselves Purushas, but the 'we' which we are referring to is actually Prakriti and not Purusha!

It may appear nonsensical, but it is true. What we call Purusha in our present state of mind is nothing but Prakriti. How is this possible? Let's explain.

First of all we assume we are Purushas and the world is Prakriti. Unfortunately we think that the world is separate and we are separate; that the things of the world are different, and we are different. That is, we have a subject-object relationship with the world. We think that we are the enjoyers and the world is the object of enjoyment. We don't identify ourselves with the world. The reasons for this non-identification could be many. First, we may not see any reason at all why we should become one with the world. Second, we may not understand how to make ourselves one with people, trees and plants, animals and birds and everything else around. Third, we may not find any use in doing so at all. Whatever the reason, we feel it easier to be separate from the world. We feel that by being separate, we can draw the utmost benefit from the world.

This is not to say we are wrong in thinking so. For all practical purposes, we ordinary people find that the world is indeed separate from us. But there is a paradox here. When we say we are Purushas and have come to enjoy the world, we have landed in a paradoxical situation: we are imagining that we are Purushas, destined to enjoy the world, and at the same time imagining that we are separate from the world. Superficially there appears to be no paradox here at all; it all appears to be perfectly sensible. But there is a paradox, and a dangerous paradox. And that paradox is, we are making Purusha and Prakriti one! We have become Advaitins in a negative way without our knowledge! We are mistaking Purusha for Prakriti, and Prakriti for Purusha!

III

All this needs some explanation. We should know who the Purusha is. Who is the Purusha? The Purusha is not what we imagine him to be; we imagine that our body and mind are the Purusha. The Purusha is not either. That is the essential mistake we ordinary people make. The Purusha is something beyond both body and mind. What are the body and mind then? Is this dear body, which I consider so dear, not Purusha then? Is my mind not the Purusha then?

Unfortunately not. Though we love our body immensely and consider it the be-all and end-all of our lives, it is not the real 'we'. Otherwise our hands would have thought and imagined so many things; our legs would have drawn so many things and written so many books. Until our mind orders them, we can see for ourselves that our body can't do anything at all. So with the mind. 'We think, therefore we are'—is a sensible statement. But in that sensible statement, it is mentioned clearly that 'we' are different from 'thinking'. We make use of something to think. If we were the mind, we would be called mad people: one moment in Calcutta and the next in California; one moment in joy and the very next in misery. And the moment we get a blow, all our mental powers are gone! Is this our fate? Is the real 'we' so helpless? Could this be the fate of us who claim to have come to enjoy the world and rule it? That can't be. So we aren't the body and the mind.

We are something different. That something different has been termed Purusha by the Samkhyans. According to these great scientists, we are all Purushas, really. There are more than

six billion Purushas in our own species and at least ten times that number in the animal world. So many Purushas there are!

The other entity is Prakriti. If there are more than about 25 billions Purushas in today's world, how many Prakritis could be there? Only one! Unimaginable, but true. There is only one Prakriti, and that is catering to the needs of the billions and billions of Purushas. How could this be possible?

It is like this. Let us reduce everything, and the universe itself, into its smallest component. Let's call it the atom. Going still further, let us reduce the atoms too to some fundamental component. What remains will be not billions of items, but just one thing, called matter. Today's scientists have equated matter also with energy. So there is only one thing: either it is matter or energy.

The Samkhyans had evolved a different method to reduce things to their fundamental elements. Going backwards, they said that there are only five elements: earth, fire, air, water and space. Combine these five in different ways, and the universe and all that we see are formed. These five things have subtle entities, out of the permutation and combination of which the gross elements have been formed. Those subtle elements are five, but they have come from something subtler. That is called Ahamkara—the individuality principle. This is derived from Mahat. The Mahat is formed of the three fundamental components—sattva, rajas, and tamas. It is these three that go together to form what has been called Prakriti. So since all that we see, hear, smell, taste, and experience in the world can be reduced to only these three components and finally to Prakriti alone, Prakriti is one and only one. Though we may see innumerable items from cotton to the star, everything is made of one Prakriti only.

Why can't Purusha also be one? The Samkhyans say that Purushas can't be one. The reason is, if you get enlightenment, I am not automatically enlightened. If you feel happy, my misery won't end spontaneously. So we are different. Thus Purushas are different. What are the Purushas made up of? Purushas are nothing but Truth, Bliss and Beauty. They are the sources of all true happiness and joy. But they have got entangled in the clutches of Prakriti. How is that?

IV

Just as we imagine that the world is meant for our enjoyment, the Purusha imagines that the body in which he resides and the mind which he uses are he himself. This false identification brings bondage, or what is called in common parlance, desire for enjoyment of the world. That is precisely what we are doing now. We are Purushas in reality—full of bliss and freedom and eternal joy. But we think we are the bodies and minds, and so we become immersed in the world. The body and the mind are products of Prakriti, as we saw. Everything is a

A Life of Silent Prayer

I have never known her [Holy Mother] hesitate to give utterance to large and generous judgement, however new or complex might be the question put before her. Her life is one long stillness of prayer. Her whole experience is of theocratic civilization. Yet she rises to the height of every situation. Is she tortured by the perversity of any about her? The only sign is a strange quiet and intensity that comes upon her. Does one carry to her some perplexity or mortification born of social developments beyond her ken? With unerring intuition she goes straight to the heart of the matter, and sets the question in the true attitude of the difficulty. —*SISTER NIVEDITA*

product of Prakriti. Like attracts like, and so Prakriti attracts Prakriti. So they get attached to one another.

Is it wrong for Prakriti to be attached to Prakriti? Is it wrong for our bodies and minds to be attached to the world? We shall put a counter question: Is falsehood right? Should we entertain falsehood? If the answer is no, then it is wrong for the body and mind to be immersed in the world.

What is falsehood here? To imagine what we are not is falsehood. We are Purushas and not Prakriti. But we imagine, as we discussed above, that we are Prakriti. Since this identification is false, the attachment to the world is also wrong. And what is wrong should immediately be given up. Once we give up false attachments, we become free. We the Purushas shall reside in all resplendence.

V

Having said this, we shall know what Swami Saradanandaji means by saying that Prakriti or the world is meant for the glorification of Purusha. Purusha would have remained all by himself—free and glorious—had there been no Prakriti. For some unknown reason, Prakriti has come close to Purusha. And she has bound him up. What is the true glory of an innocent prisoner, put to jail for no offence of his? His glory is in getting released from bondage.

So the true glory of Purusha is in being released from the hold of Prakriti. To put this in other words, our real glory lies in not identifying with the world or our body and mind, but in realizing what we really are. How can we achieve this seemingly impossible task—a task as difficult as swimming against the current?

We can achieve this goal by firmly giving up what we are not. Why should we give up everything when we are enjoying the world? The same question was asked by a camel which was eating thorns. Its mouth was bleeding, but it thought it was enjoying the meal! We are not the body and therefore let us firmly give up everything that brings the idea that we are the body. All that binds us to the body should be given up. Again, since we are not the mind, let us give up everything that binds us to the mind too. Simply put, let us not fall a prey to any allurement of Prakriti. Let there be a beautiful movie, let there be a beautiful music performance, let there be a grand building somewhere, let there be tasty food—but let us not get attached or attracted to any of them. All the allurements of the world which our five senses get attached to have been simplified by Sri Ramakrishna into two: kamini and kanchana. Then there are two subtle attachments, called desire for name and fame. These four are not attractions, but bondages! We should understand this clearly.

We don't mean that all of us should become mendicant sannyasins by giving up everything. The phrase 'giving up' is quite confusing. No one wants us to give up everything. How can we live with our families and friends if we do that? What is meant is, let us give up attachment. Attachment brings only bondage. Let us use what comes of itself. Attachment alone is the source of bondage and let us give that up. Once we give up attachment, we have really given up everything. Then we shall reach our true nature, the Purusha.

So, coming back to Swami Saradanandaji's statement, what is the real glory of the Purusha? The real glory of the Purusha is not in becoming a slave to the senses and the world. There may be millions of allurements all around him, but he must remain firm and show his power of non-attachment. He must not become a slave to the world or to Prakriti. So when Saradanandaji remarks about the Samkhya philosophy 'that the creation of the world is an amazing enterprise of nature (Prakriti) designed specifically to make the Self (Purusha) realize its own glory,' what is meant is this: the Purusha is released from bondage.

Nature is there to enslave us, and not give us joy. Our true strength is not in becoming slaves to our passions and desires, but in conquering them. That is one of the greatest lessons Samkhya philosophy teaches us.

EDUCATION IS THE MANIFESTATION OF THE PERFECTION ALREADY IN MAN

SWAMI ATMAVIDANANDA

What is Perfection?

At the outset let us try to understand the scope of the statement 'THE PERFECTION ALREADY IN MAN'. Supreme Reality is expressed as Sat-chit-ananda, Infinite Existence, Knowledge, Bliss. Wherever we may touch that Supreme Reality, we shall be coming in contact with these aspects of the Reality. Man being a part and parcel of this reality, he also has all these aspects in full measure.

We can understand the above fact with the help of an example from modern science. Modern biologists have discovered that the human genome, that is only one cell of our body, has all the codes required for manifestation of the full human being with all the characteristics which we have developed from the beginning of the human race. But, the cells of different parts of the body function differently because only those codes which are required for manifesting a particular characteristic are activated and others are held dormant. Thus, by suitably modifying the switching process, scientists can create a body from a single cell, or one can create a full human being of the required qualities.

What does this prove? It proves what our Upanishadic seers have been proclaiming–*Poornamadah poornamidam* etc.–that the unseen Supreme reality is whole and this, the visual manifestation which is but a small part of the Supreme reality, is also whole.

If this manifestation of the Perfection–the wholeness–is possible by intervention of the scientists at the physical level, full manifestation of the Infinite knowledge and perfection hidden in every student also is possible with the help of proper education.

Thus we see in Swamiji's statement and in the perception of a number of other educationalists' and psychologists' like J.F.Herbart (German philosopher) Froebel, Pestoloxxi, Maria Montessori and John Dewey, that education is the manifestation of the innate potentialities in man and education is not filling information from outside into an empty brain.

Levels of Manifestation of Potentiality

Now let us look at this from the practical point of view.

Survival is the most basic instinct in man—survival of himself and the race. So whether we have schools or not, every individual's first concern is with his survival. All the developments of the human race from time immemorial to the present time–like invention of fire, agriculture, tools, wheel and so on—were all hidden in the human beings. It requires but a situation, a challenge or a suggestion to bring it out. When that stimulus is available, like the switching in the genome's case, he slowly manifests the perfection acquired from generation to generation and also from his previous births. Thus he works towards survival strategies.

Swami Atmavidananda is the President of the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysore. This is his talk delivered at a symposium on 'Education is the Manifestation of the Perfection Already in Man' held at the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysore, on 5 Sep 2000. □

When man reaches a certain stability in the struggle for existence, he looks towards other finer things, like improvement in living conditions, art, culture, etc. These also are hidden in him but only in a potential form waiting to manifest, requiring only stimulus from outside.

When he crosses these two milestones, i.e., bare survival and for some, a comfortable living, he searches for the meaning of his existence. This urge takes him deeper into himself and takes him to the manifestation of his full spiritual potential. This he may acquire from a teacher or by communion with nature or may be by diving deep within his own self.

Thus we see that manifestation of the perfection already in man is the aim of all education though it may be in several stages according to the state in which the particular human being is placed.

For a man who is struggling for existence, his education and the corresponding manifestation of perfection is limited to the acquiring of the bare necessities like food, clothing and shelter. But as he evolves, and with the right type of education, he progresses towards arts and culture and finally towards the spiritual fulfilment.

Right type of education is important at every stage because if a poor man gets more wealth but not the right education, he squanders it. Even a slightly evolved person, if he does not understand the real fulfilment as the manifestation of the perfection, he wallows in his wealth or gets into other desires. Hippy movement and increase in crime rate prove the vacuum that is felt by people even in advanced countries possessing wealth but wanting right type of education.

The present education system is aimed mainly at the first stage, i.e., how to equip people for earning their livelihood; that too in an undesirable manner by cramming a lot of information without assimilating and internalising the ideas. It does not give any stimulus that is required for assimilation or help towards opening the higher faculties and potentialities. Thus even those who are earning handsome amounts are stuck with their wealth. An education system modified to give stimulus to people of all cultural, moral and spiritual content can improve the situation.

This can be achieved by teachers acting as facilitators instead of only information providers, thus allowing students to grow by themselves in the path of least resistance by assimilation of ideas and also by laying due stress on good character by teachers' own exemplary lives.

In any situation–from primary education to Brahma Vidya—the teacher is the key figure in providing the right type of environment and stimulus to the students. That is why we treat our teachers with utmost respect with prayers like:

Gurur Brahma Gurur Vishnuh
Gurur devo Maheswarah.



Vedantic Thought Bomb

It is the worker who is attached to results that grumbles about the nature of the duty which has fallen to his lot; to the unattached worker all duties are equally good, and form efficient instruments with which selfishness and sensuality may be killed...Let us work on, whatever happens to be our duty, being ever ready to put our shoulders to the wheel. Then surely shall we see the Light!

Exploring the Mystery of Life

SAMPOORAN SINGH

The human mind is caught in a crisis of perception, a crisis of psychic pandemic. It has become a slave of the known. The mind is always trying to expand its experience and knowledge-information gathering-its action within that field, its thought-seeking—its own motivation and acquisition. It is to accumulate knowledge and act skilfully on the basis of past reactions. Man has started living in a man-made cosmos, divorced from Reality, which has made man a mechanical and repetitive machine. This has brought disorder, violence, corruption and various psychological imbalances and is leading man to self-annihilation. Every activity in the man-made cosmos adds to entropy and enhances pain, misery and travails.

We are trying politically, legally and socially to bring order in the man-made social cosmos, but inwardly we are confused, uncertain, anxious and in conflict. We treat the symptoms and not the disease. The inner, if it is not understood, educated and transformed, will always overcome the outer, however well organized it may be politically, economically and socially. Without inward order there will always be danger to human life.

This article explores the limitations of the sensual world, mutation of the human psyche, and presents a scientific vision of the mystery of the wholeness of life.

Sensual World

When we 'look at an object', the latter must be hit by light rays and reflect them into the eye or some instrument of observation. We cannot make any factual statement about a given object without 'getting in touch' with it. The 'touch' is a real physical interaction. There is transfer of photons between the subject and the object, which means that both the object and the subject are affected by observation and the perception gets distorted. The mind can see an object in succession only. Thus, perception is also in succession and the sensual world is also in succession.

The retina of the eye converts the distorted perception (image) to an electrical signal and sends the signal to the inner sensorium. The inner sensorium constructs our world (subjective) picture, which is 'colourless, cold, mute'. The colour and sound, hot or cold, are lacking in our world model, in our sensual world.

Physics shows that the different colour-sensations are constituted of different wavelengths of light (between about 800 and 400 millimicrons). The yellow light has the wavelength in the neighbourhood of 590 millimicrons. The object leaves a 'sensation' of colour in our world picture.

The field of external objects of cognizance has made the subject of all cognizance withdraw to the background, often to apparent non-existence. Erwin Schrodinger concludes:

> The material world has only been constructed at the price of taking the self, that is, mind, out of it, removing it; mind is not part of it; obviously, therefore, it can neither act on it nor be acted on by any of its parts.
>
> Mind has erected the objective outside world of the natural philosopher out of its own stuff. Mind could not cope with this gigantic task otherwise than by the simplifying device of excluding itself—withdrawing from its conceptual creation. Hence the latter does not contain its creator.[1]

Dr.Sampooran Singh, a defence scientist by vocation, has been interested from early years in the nexus between science and spirituality and has written a number of articles on this theme. He is one of the authors of *A Masterplan for Human Survival.* □

All scientific knowledge is based on sense perception. We exclude the subject of cognizance from the domain of nature that we endeavour to understand. Hence we are inclined to take something objective, as forming part of the real world around us. Erwin Schrodinger has called it as the 'principle of objectivation', which has led to the introduction of an illusion of subject and object as two separate entities, which in reality does not exist. It is a simplification to explain the infinitely intricate problem of nature.

Fritjof Capra wrote, 'Physicists have come to see that all their theories of natural phenomena, including the "laws" they describe, are creations of the human mind; properties of our conceptual map of reality, rather than of reality itself. This conceptual scheme is necessarily limited and approximate, as are all the scientific theories and "laws of nature" it contains.'[2] We are aware of the parts of the map, not of the territory.

Memory and Future Projection

St.Augustine spotted the subtle illusion that memory creates. Bertrand Russell summarized his view-point as 'past and future can only be thought of as present: "past" must be identified with memory, and "future" with expectation, memory and expectation being both present facts.'[3] This has been recently confirmed by Erwin Schrodinger in words:

> I venture to call it indestructible since it has a peculiar time-table, namely mind is always *now*. There is really no before and after for mind. There is only a now that includes memories and expectations.[4]

We are never directly aware of real past at all–rather we are aware of a memory-picture of the past, and further the memory exists only in and as the *present*! In the words of Alan Watts:

> From memory you infer that there have been past events. But you are not aware of any past events. You know the past only in the present and as part of the present.[5]

The same holds for the future as well, for any thought of tomorrow is nevertheless a present thought.

The recall of the past memory is called identification. The identification with the past memory-trace constructs what is called the cultural belief structure, or conditioning of the psyche, or content of consciousness.

The identification with the memory-trace or future projection constructs and stores impurities. Thought is limited and adds to the conditioning of the human race. There is forgetfulness about the essence of our nature. It creates an illusion of separateness. And the travail of human life begins. Psychological involvement and attachment are due to absence of the awareness of cosmic reality. It brings disorder in human life.

Time

The subjectivity of time is best explained in Einstein's words:

> The experiences of an individual appears to us arranged in a series of events; in this series the single events which we remember appear to be ordered according to the criterion of 'earlier' and 'later'. There exists, therefore, for the individual, an I-time, or subjective time. This is not measurable.[6]

Each mental percept has temporal and spatial qualities; an image appears to have size, shape and extension and also exists at some time. The model is constructed on a four-dimensional time-space framework which we tacitly assume to be closely parallel to the inferred public world. As each frame of reference constructs its own time-space section and negates that of another frame, there exists, a multiplicity of four-dimensional perceptual worlds.

Thought is sequential, successive, one-dimensional, while the real world presents itself as multidimensional, non-successive, simultaneous pattern of infinite richness and variety. Thought must go into abeyance before one perceives the

Life is too short to spend in talking about frauds and cranks. The highest use of life is to hold it at the service of all beings. —SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Reality, the Eternity. The non-dual insight knows all times–past and future–as existing in this Eternal Moment. The non-dual insight emerges from the Absolute Void, Absolute Silence, Timelessness.

Eternity

Memory is not the real knowledge of the 'past', but is a present experience. Past and future collapse into now, before and after collapse into present, linearity into simultaneity, and time vanishes into Eternity. The present moment contains all time and is therefore itself timeless, and hence this timeless present is Eternity itself--a moment, without date or duration, extension or succession, past or future, before and after, having the whole of existence simultaneously, which is the nature of Eternity.

Mind is Absolute Subjectivity, non-dual awareness, Supreme Knower. It is pure Consciousness. The cosmos and beyond is unity; its operation is spaceless and timeless, hence infinite and eternal. All of infinity-eternity is simultaneously present at every point of space and time; then you perceive the Absolute.

Renunciation

Renunciation implies that the thought-time goes to abeyance and the dualistic mind attains the state of non-dual Mind. Renunciation does not refer to any psycho-physical activity. It is not an act of the ego. It is not an effort of the will. When there is no attachment, no desire, and no hate in the consciousness, then your every breath has the perfume of inner renunciation. It is a state of non-dual consciousness, or absolute rest frame of pure consciousness. It is living without attachment or aversion.

Renunciation is also called the dimension of understanding. Each man is born with two dimensions–self-awareness and understanding. Self-awareness implies that one is aware of his own volition, own thought-time. When the dimension of self-awareness is transcended, the dimension of understanding is born. Understanding comes in a quiet mind.

Renunciation leads to non-action state of consciousness when dualistic thought goes to abeyance, when conditionings do not move and there is calmness and equanimity. It is purification of the mind-brain-body system. It eliminates all the toxins, all the imbalances, impurities, from the body and the brain, equipping them to be precise and accurate. The biological and psychological organism, this magnificent electro-magnetic apparatus, moves through life with glory and majesty, with the grandeur of precision and accuracy. Renunciation bestows intuition and spontaneity. One moves with the rhythm of life, with the universal laws of Nature.

Technology to Purify the Psyche

We have to learn the art of purification of the mind-brain-body system. The technology is embedded in the art of scientific observation of the dynamics of the conditioned psyche.[7] In the language of Bhagavad Gita, the art of purification through observation of psyche is called *Karma Yoga*, which is a way of handling the psycho-physical organism (conditioned psyche), which is loaded with conditioning of millions of years.

The art of observation consists in observing a thought without interfering in its flow. One has to be aware of his own inward activities, watch what you are thinking and never let one thought escape without observing its nature and its source. During observing we do not transfer any energy to thought, so that thought withers away of itself. When we begin to see that which is false, false drops by itself, and there is the beginning of awareness, of intelligence. You have to be light unto yourself and it is one of the most difficult things.

Perception without reference to memory and without the content of thought as knowledge is an encounter of Intelligence, of the Unknown. Perception uninhibited by the content of experience, knowledge and memory leads to intimate contact with the Eternal Reality.

Conclusion

Life is a field of innumerable energies and the dance of these energies, of which we are also

a part. The energies get solidified and we call it matter. This is true both at biological level and psychological level. Sidney D.Diell wrote, 'You have the ultimate unit (atom) doing the dance by itself–that is the beauty and elegance of it.'[8]

The Universal Consciousness, the Reality, the Eternity, the Absolute is a field of innumerable energies, innumerable frequencies. It expresses itself in innumerable modes of which three are the dominant modes: the physical including human body, the mental or the psychological, which constructs time-space matrices, or thought-time; and the Absolute Rest field when thought-time is transcended. Every human being has to raise his level of awareness to perceive the wholeness of life.

The art of observation leads to a quantum jump from the symbolic-dualistic frame of reference to absolute rest frame. It is to learn to relax the body and the mind–not through passivity, not through activity, but through being. You are alert but not active. That is one way of saying that the movement of the body and the mind is one aspect of life and the relaxation of the body and the mind is another aspect of life.

Every human being has to take a pilgrimage within–from self-observation to self-knowledge, to Silence and that which is beyond Silence. The pilgrimage is through the pursuit of insight (intuition) in the vertical, spiritual dimension through the horizontal methods of science.

The art of observation is looking at life as consisting of movement and non-movement, motion and non-motion, action and non-action, life and death, darkness and light, and so on. The two together make the whole of life.

The Silence is the emptiness of consciousness when all the paraphernalia that has been collected is brushed aside. It is living in communion with nature. Silence is a tension-free and pressure-free state of being. Meditation is a way of living where relationships are movements of relaxation and not tension and pressure. The cosmos is a huge song of harmony. There is harmony in nature of life.

Life is a multi-dimensional phenomenon and human beings who are expressions of the phenomenon are themselves multi-dimensional organisms. Life is interrelatedness and that interrelatedness cannot be defined in humanist technology. To live with the awareness of that interrelatedness is to live in communion with Nature. It is to perceive the Eternity, the Wholeness of Life.

Spirituality is the science of consciousness and physics is the science of matter and energy. Spirituality deals with the ultimate–the supreme reality, and with its perception, its understanding and being aware of it.

Life seems to be Intelligence, an energy of Intelligence which has been unwinding, uncovering, manifesting itself for billions of years and yet has remained ever virgin and ever fresh. Every existence is one ultimate Reality. All the seen and unseen existences (frequencies) are nothing but manifestations of the same Divinity that is manifest in man.

The perennial philosophy is defined as distilled wisdom of the human race. Man must develop the faculty of pure perception to perceive this wisdom, or intelligence. If man does not work himself, for himself, by himself, through exploring self-knowledge of his own psyche to understand the wholeness of life, the mystery of life, he does so at his own peril.



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Letter to a Friend

My dear R.,

How to be free? We know that we feel cramped inside our bodies. We feel as if the body and mind retard the infinite dimensions, potentialities and aspirations of our consciousness. In quiet moments, moments of sickness and suffering, our awareness of identification with the body-mind complex makes us insecure. What is the meaning of our existence? What are we supposed to do with each passing moment? For what are we doing all these sets of actions? How to take care of this most terrible and frightening disease of hunger? Is there no hope?

Then Sri Ramakrishna comes. A great hope in our lives. A great relief for suffering man. 'Ah, I have a higher dimension after all!' A man who lives a life of perfect, unquestionable renunciation and gives a great dignity to humankind. A life which beckons man to the infinitude of creation, of oneness with the cosmos, nay, oneness with a transcendental reality beyond all intellectual understanding or verbal description. Something which helps us to transcend all the petty conceptions and identifications we have. His disciple, Swami Vivekananda, lets free the lion roar of Vedanta, 'uttisthata jagrata', 'srnvantu visve amrtasya putrah' and so on. He lives a life which bridges the infinite past with the present, bridging eastern mysticism with western practicality, bridging science and spirituality and importantly bridging a Godward mission with a manward passion.

What to say of Shri Shri Sarada Devi. For once, in the process of describing the trinity, you are short of words. An embodiment of infinite love, compassion, and motherhood and at the same time the last word in purity and saintliness. She again stands as a light, a solace to mankind brushed and tossed hither and thither by the cycle of time. A great and profound chapter in the entire history of the human race. An unsurpassed phenomenon—a life of the greatest external simplicity combined with the highest internal manifestation. Her life tells the common man, 'You need not be rich, you need not be influential, famous, powerful, yet you can be great! Not just great but live a very exalted life while you pass your allotted days in the human frame.'

The direct disciples of Shri Ramakrishna each reveal several facets of the now-elevated status of mankind. All of them based in tyaga and seva, of renunciation and service. 'Pooh to all this vanity of relations and attachments and duties! Off from me, you leeches of lust and lucre. You think you can stop me from fully manifesting my divinity? You are mistaken. We have come with Shri Ramakrishna to release in this world a tremendous spiritual energy which will energise this burdened planet for years to come.' Can anyone ever fathom the realms in which they spent their earthly days!

It is in this lineage, R., that you have taken shelter and identified yourself with. Therefore I have not the least pang of embarrassment or conflict or guilt that I unnecessarily used to speak of renunciation to you. I know it was impossible for me to have in any way redirected the direction of your destiny. I was just an instrument of the Lord who alone will be ever protecting you. The Lord has chosen you. I am not being poetical or sounding mystical. It is a plain and simple fact.

The Lord does his work at various levels. At one level he wants to build things in a short time. At the other he wants things to go on as they are till they become ready for the higher levels. One class consists of the workers and the other, of teachers of men—acharyas who live what they preach. All said and done, after we are through with all 'progress' and 'development' and civilization, we shall come to the perfect calmness of a *kaupina*-wearing Ramana Maharshi or a joyously-taking-Lord's-name—Sri Ramakrishna! Those jivas who are ready in this life for this task, the Lord fashions as sadhus. They keep alive the *parampara*—the tradition of highest greatness.

There are then the vast majority who keep up the play of the Lord. Each jiva chooses different stages to evolve from. And, directed, controlled, manipulated by the Grand Intelligence this universe of name and form, and of change, chaos, confusion goes on.

This change, chaos, confusion, are like the waves on a limitless sea. This sea is the Lord Himself, the limitless Brahman. Now you can appreciate the beauty of Swami Premeshanandaji's masterpiece on Thakur's avatara—*arupa sayore lila lahari*...in the ocean of formlessness are the waves of Divine Sport.

It is left now to the intelligent man whether to identify himself with the wave nature or to dive deep and get dissolved in the ocean. *doob doob doob doob sagare amar man*...

After long deliberation and thoughts of these kinds, I have decided to live in the world. The body and mind are not through with experiences and for some reason unknown to me at this point of time, the Lord seems to ask me to remain in this world. I am now fatigued and tired out. I have to invigorate and pull myself up. This process has started with a conscious surrender to the Lord. May He guide me and protect me.

Often at nights I pray to Mother and Thakur, 'I am your child, if you cheat me with worthless glass beads, I will be cheated. I have no other refuge but you. If you really love me, you will give me your best.' My dear R., it has helped me to pray sincerely and to develop a relationship with the Lord. I feel I am on my way now. Fully bowing to the Lord's will. The snake bites all its preys. Some prey immediately die. Others run around hither and thither and then die eventually. The latter is my case. The Lord has bitten my worldliness and 'I' will eventually succumb. Oh what a thrill. No wonder the sannyasin loves death! So my dear R., Lord willing, you may see a strange spectacle of an 'intellectually convinced renunciate' playing a strange part in the Lord's play! Hari Om to the Lord's ways! What a vast gap between the intellectual conviction and actually living the life. Fear not and worry not that you could not make me join the Order. I have to manifest my divinity wherever I am. That is the deal I have struck with the Lord. Funny isn't it! But the basic truths in life are the simplest. And the only things I need to aspire for, whether I reach it or not, are 'Truth, purity, unselfishness', which manifest perceptibly in this world as love.

May Thakur, Maa, Swamiji, all the great ones and all the auspicious energies in the Universe help you attain the highest. May the Guru, the Ishtha and the mantra protect you ever in the path of sadhana.

I remain with everlasting love,

Your humble friend,
S.

This letter is a self-analysis by a very sincere aspirant who could not, due to physical ailments, take up formal renunciation but succeeds in keeping the flag, the Ideal, flying aloft.—Ed.

A FAMILY OF RENOUNCERS

DR. C.S. SHAH

The absolutely sane man the world had ever seen. He denied rituals and gods, atman and paramatman, but never compromised reasoning. His efforts at last led him to experience the Truth and become Buddha, The Enlightened. Truth and Knowledge flowed from him as compassion, austerities and *tapas*, kindness and humility, suffering and sensitivity.

And what a sacrifice to realize the Truth! Palace and luxury, wife and son appeared trivial before the yearning to seek the Highest. He was ahead of his time. Liberal and kind, he had selected Yashodhara as his bride. They had a happy married life with no misery, no worries. But one dark night (or was it 'one fine night!') the farewell! Thrice Siddhartha went back to the bedside of his sleeping wife. He grieved for Yashodhara, for the fact that she instead of he, was making a sacrifice for the world!

Siddhartha bade farewell to the world. Lonely and restless, he faced the onslaught of desires and *vasanas*, but in the end won the battle, and became Buddha.

Returning to the gardens of his hometown, Kapilavastu, seven years later, he paid a memorable visit to his wife and son. Yashodhara received him as a nun, in yellow clothes, in a hut that was without roof and mattresses. Her son was beside her. In silence and an intensity unknown to worldly minded people, Buddha talked to them about Knowledge and Truth. Turning to leave, he cast his last glance on his two dearest ones,now simple *sadhakas*.

Yashodhara, realizing that Buddha was leaving for good, urged her son to ask for his legacy from his father. Bewildered, the son ran after his father, and said, 'O Father, please give me my inheritance.' Thrice he had to ask before The Lord, turning to his beloved disciple Ananda, said, 'Give the boy the ochre (gerrua) cloth.'

And Ananda, aware of the silent searching and expectant eyes of Yashodhara, asked the Lord, 'And Sir, are we not to take ladies into our fold?' The large-hearted Buddha replied, 'Why, Ananda, since when has sex come into the arena of Truth? She is most welcome.' Thus joined wife and son in the sangha of Tathagata, a true Jnani of melting heart.

The heart that melted soon merged with the hearts of the masses. Now the Buddha felt in hundreds of bodies, ate from hundreds of mouths, and shed tears from hundreds of eyes of the weak, exploited, and depressed. He walked slowly, for the flag of compassion that he was carrying was too heavy for any chariot or horseback to endure. Only the Mother Earth was capable of sustaining such a heavy load and responsibility as her noblest son was upholding.

While evil and hatred, war and bloodshed, continued to march ahead with trumpets and bugles, arrows and swords, horses and elephants, Buddha's compassion was slow to reach in time. At last it caught up with King Ashoka in the middle of the Kalinga war. The half-finished, famished, and shocked king in the middle of the holocaust and destruction was gently covered with the soothing ochre robe of Tathagata. That was just the beginning of appreciation of compassion that radiated for centuries.

Today also, wherever kindness and compassion pervade, we get a glimpse of Buddha's serene and radiant face that represents 'Truth as Compassion'. The world continues to receive more and more Buddhas, for Buddha is not a person but a state of being.



Dr. C. S. Shah is a devotee of the Master. □

WHO IS TO BLAME?

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Student: Swamiji, I am in great sorrow because I have secured low marks in my exams.

Swamiji: There have been many mistakes in our lives. But we are going on. Glory be unto us that we have made mistakes! Take a long look at your past life. If your present condition is good, it has been caused by all the past mistakes as well as successes. Glory be unto success! Glory be unto mistakes! Do not look back upon what has been done. Go ahead! [*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* 8:127; hereafter only the volume and page numbers will be indicated.]

Student: But Swamiji, I would like to be at the top always.

Swamiji: Be sensible. We make mistakes, what of that? ...Do not repent! After having done work, do not think of it. Go on! Stop not! Don't look back! What will you gain by looking back? You lose nothing, gain nothing. (2:471).

Student: By securing low marks, I have not done good. How can I not think about it?

Swamiji: Good and evil have an equal share in moulding character, and in some instances misery is a greater teacher than happiness. In studying the great characters the world has produced, I dare say, in the vast majority of cases, it would be found that it was misery that taught more than happiness, it was poverty that taught more than wealth, it was blows that brought out their inner fire more than praise (1:27).

Student: But, I did not make any mistake. Then what will I learn from it? I cannot understand why I got low marks. There must have been mistakes in paper correction or someone must not have handled the answer sheets properly.

Swamiji: Have you seen that characteristic of children? They are always trying to throw the blame on someone else. Baby minds [are] trying, when they make a mistake, to throw the blame upon someone [else] (1:496). We complain of others in our failures. The moment I am unsuccessful, I say, so-and-so is the cause of the failure. In failure, one does not like to confess one's own faults and weaknesses. Each person tries to hold himself faultless and lay the blame upon somebody or something else, or even on bad luck (2:14). Blame neither man, nor God, nor anyone in the world. When you find yourselves suffering, blame yourselves, and try to do better (2:225).

Student: This is something new that I have heard. Can this negative tendency be overcome?

Swamiji: This is the only solution of the problem. Those that blame others, and, alas! the number of them is increasing every day, are

The annual reports of an intelligent boy who is studying in 11th standard have come out. Unfortunately, the results have been much below everybody's expectations. He himself is feeling miserable. In his despondency, he looks in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* for succour. His astounding discoveries have been beautifully brought out in the following conversations by Br. Niraj of Chennai Math for the benefit of the youth. The answers are Swamiji's own words indicated under proper references. More will follow in due course. –Editor □

generally miserable with helpless brains; they have brought themselves to that pass through their own mistakes and blame others, but this does not alter their position. It does not serve them in any way. This attempt to throw the blame upon others only weakens them the more.

Therefore, blame none for your own faults, stand upon your own feet, and take the whole responsibility upon yourselves. Say, 'This misery that I am suffering is of my own doing, and that very thing proves that it will have to be undone by me alone.' That which I created, I can demolish; that which is created by some one else I shall never be able to destroy. Therefore, stand up, be bold, be strong. Take the whole responsibility on your own shoulders, and know that you are the creator of your own destiny(2:225).

Student: Still, I cannot accept that others have not contributed to my failure. What about your advice to them?

Swamiji: We are always standing up to set right other people, and not ourselves. If we are miserable, we say, 'Oh, the world is a devil's world.' We curse others and say, 'What infatuated fools!' We only get what we deserve. It is a lie when we say, the world is bad and we are good. It can never be so. It is a terrible lie we tell ourselves. This is the first lesson to learn: be determined not to curse anything outside, not to lay the blame upon any one outside, but be a man, stand up, lay the blame on yourself. You will find, that is always true. Get hold of yourself (2:8). You only make your offence greater by heaping misery upon misery, by imagining that the external world is hurting you, and crying out, 'Oh, this devil's world! This man hurts me; that man hurts me!' and so forth. It is adding lies to misery (2:9).

Student: Well, suppose I don't blame others. What next?

Swamiji: All the strength and succour you want is within yourselves. Therefore, make your own future. 'Let the dead past bury its dead.' The infinite future is before you, and you must always remember that each word, thought, and deed, lays up a store for you and that as the bad thoughts and bad works are ready to spring upon you like tigers, so also there is the inspiring hope that the good thoughts and good deeds are ready with the power of a hundred thousand angels to defend you always and for ever (2:225).

Student: I am extremely frightened about my future prospects. How to overcome this weakness?

Swamiji: The weak have no place here, in this life or in any other life. Weakness leads to slavery. Weakness leads to all kinds of misery, physical and mental. Weakness is death. There are hundreds of thousands of

HE BEGGED FOR OTHERS

During the initial periods, one of the centres of the Ramakrishna Mission, like many others, was suffering from financial constraint. The swami-in-charge met a wealthy gentleman of the town who promised to help financially. He requested the swami to come to his house at a specific time.

When the swami reached the residence of the businessman, the gate-keeper stopped him and without enquiring into the details, asked him to stand in the queue of beggars waiting for their turn. In the mean time the gentleman came out of the house to see if the swami had come. He was surprised and embarrassed to find the revered swami standing in the row of petty beggars. But the swami replied with his characteristic simplicity and humility that that was his right place, that he rightly belonged to the group of beggars!

microbes surrounding us, but they cannot harm us unless we become weak, until the body is ready and predisposed to receive them. There may be a million microbes of misery, floating about us. Never mind! They dare not approach us, they have no power to get a hold on us, until the mind is weakened. This is the great fact: strength is life, weakness is death. Strength is felicity, life eternal, immortal; weakness is constant strain and misery: weakness is death (2:3).

Student: How do we become responsible for the suffering that sometimes seems thrust upon us?

Swamiji: We must learn that nothing can happen to us, unless we make ourselves susceptible to it. I have just said, no disease can come to me until the body is ready; it does not depend alone on the germs, but upon a certain predisposition which is already in the body. We get only that for which we are fitted. Let us give up our pride and understand this, that never is misery undeserved. There never has been a blow undeserved: there never has been an evil for which I did not pave the way with my own hands. We ought to know that. Analyse yourselves and you will find that every blow you have received, came to you because you prepared yourselves for it. You did half, and the external world did the other half: that is how the blow came (2:8).

Student: How will this understanding do good to us?

Swamiji: That will sober us down. At the same time, from this very analysis will come a note of hope, and the note of hope is: 'I have no control of the external world, but that which is in me and nearer unto me, my own world, is in my control. If the two together are required to make a failure, if the two together are necessary to give me a blow, I will not contribute the one which is in my keeping; and how then can the blows come? If I get real control of myself, the blow will never come.' (2:8).

I'm Fine Thank You!

There's nothing the matter with me,
I'm as healthy as I can be.
I have arthritis in both my knees,
And when I talk, I talk with a wheeze.
My pulse is weak, and my blood is thin,
But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in.

I have arch supports for both my feet
Or I wouldn't be able to be on the street.
Sleep is denied me night after night,
And in the morning I'm just a sight!
My memory's failing, my head's in a spin,
But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in.

I think my liver is out of whack,
And a terrible pain is in my back.
My hearing is poor, my sight is dim,
'Most everything seems to be out of trim.
I'm peacefully living on aspirin,
But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in.

The moral is this, as my tale I unfold,
That for you and me who are growing old,
It's better to say, 'I'm fine', with a grin,
Than to let people know the shape we are in.
How do I know that my youth is all spent?
Well, my 'get up and go' has got up and went.
But I really don't mind when I think with a grin
Of all the grand places my 'get up' has been.

Old age is golden, I've heard it said,
But sometimes I wonder as I get into bed,
With my ears in a drawer, my teeth in a cup,
My eyes on the table until I wake up,
Ere sleep overtakes me I say to myself,
'Is there anything else I could lay on the shelf?'

When I was young my slippers were red,
I could kick my heels over my head.
When I was older my slippers were blue,
But I still could dance the whole night through.
Now that I'm old my slippers are black,
I can walk to the store but pull my way back.

I get up each morning and dust off my wits,
I pick up the paper and read the 'Obits'.
If my name is still missing I know I'm not dead,
So I have a good breakfast and go back to bed.

GUJARAT EARTHQUAKE RELIEF WORK BY RAMAKRISHNA MISSION



Ramakrishna Mission has started extensive primary relief services among the people affected by the recent devastating earthquake at various places in Gujarat from 26.01.2001 itself, through its three centres at Rajkot, Porbandar and Limbdi in Saurashtra. So far, Ramakrishna Mission has spent more than Rs. 1.50 crores on relief works.

Rajkot centre

The Mission's centre at Rajkot distributed 1,17,985 food packets; 1,00,080 nos. biscuits, 11,000 kg. gathia, 5,484 kg. oil, 1,420 kg. wheat, 6,300 kg. *atta*, 19,940 kg. rice, 870 kg. *bajri*, 1,100 kg. *khichudi*, 4,345 kg. pulses, 3,200 kg. green vegetables, 60 kg. salt, 378 kg. spices, 2550 kg. sugar, 615 kg. Molasses, 6,720 kg. potato, 4,300 kg. onion, 625 kg. milk powder, 370 kg. tea, 18,117 no. family kits, 196,741 pouches/ bottles of mineral water, 7,110 plastic sheets, 6894 plastic tents, 1875 tents, 7878 cement sheets, 5,804 pcs. clothes, 1,650 sweaters, 36,837 blankets, 1290 pcs. *chaddar*, 455 bed sheets, 100 towels, 17,812 nos. of match boxes, 64,025 nos. candles, 3,917 tubes of tooth paste, 62 boxes of medicines, 200 bottles of blood, etc., among thousands of earthquake victims. Moreover 11,000 kg. fire-wood was also supplied for cremation of dead bodies in different places.

A medical camp was also conducted at Bhuj and surrounding areas.

Areas Covered: Kutch District: Taluka Bhuj: Sri Ramakrishna Vivekananda Kendra, Bhuj, Dhaneti, etc. Total 24 villages; Taluka Anjar: Vaghadya chowk, Adipur, & surrounding vilages etc. Total 13 villages; Taluka Bhachau: Bhachau city, Nani Chirai, Moti Chirai, Varasana, etc. Total 5 villages; Taluka Rapar: Total 32 villages; Taluka Mandvi: Total 6 villages; Taluka Gandidham: Total 14 villages; *Rajkot District:* Taluka Tankara: Meghapar Zala, Ghunda, Neshda, etc. Total 13 villages; Taluka Maliya Miyana: Mota Dahinsar, Nana Dahinsar, Movaliya, Vavaniya etc. Total 17 villages; Taluka Wankaner: Rafaleshwar, Juni Kalawadi, Bokada Thambha etc. Total 21 villages; Taluka Morvi: Derada, Luntavadara, Ghunghada etc. Total 32

villages; *Jamnagar District:* Taluka Jodiya: Kothariya, Dudhai, Bela, etc. Total 14 villages.

Families Covered: more than 50,000. More than 2,40,000 people of 191 villages are benefited.

Porbandar Centre

So far as the town of Porbandar is concerned, though loss of lives is less, thousands of houses have collapsed or have been rendered uninhabitable due to quake in 16 villages of Porbandar district as well as in Kharvawad area of Porbandar town. Ramakrishna Mission in Porbandar has spent more than Rs.15 lakhs on primary relief among three thousand families of 50 villages as per the details given below, apart from Free Kitchens started in villages Bharwada and Keshav of Porbandar district and in Kharvawad locality of Porbandar town in which about 800 persons are being served two meals a day free.



Items Distributed: 2202 Food packets, 5176 Packets of biscuits, 3109 Blankets, 1095 Quilts, 183 Bed sheets, 1038 Sweaters, 2920 Tarpaulin sheets, 74 Carpets for schools, 11358 Assorted clothes, 4550 Kgs. Bajara, 4350 Kgs. Wheat, 1555 Kgs. Rice, 1205 Kgs. Dal, 725 Kgs. Onion, 1520 Kgs. Potato, 250 Kgs. Milk powder, 75 Sets of Utensils etc.

Areas Covered: *Porbandar District*: Bharwada, Morla, Jambu, Goradiaridhar, Earda, Derodar, Mitrala, Bhad, Bakharla, Hathiyani, Keshav, Bagvadar, Maiyari, Katela, Kadegi, Segaras, Chhatrala, Srinagar, Bhodadar, Kuchhadi, Kinderkhada, Visavada, Ratadi, Degam, Kutiyana, Ishwaria, Mohabatpara, Kerala, Bhogsar, Singada, Gharsan, Ranakhirasara. *Jamnagar District*: Nandana, Hadamatia, Mevasa, Bhatia, Pindara, Khandhera, Banga, Jodiya, Moda, Gangajala, Modpar, Balachhadi, Bet Dwarka, Bhaturia. *Rajkot District*: Gadhala, Khakhijalia, Panchhatdi, Motifalia (Upleta), Tansava, Daduka, Juna Kerala, Jadeswar (Upleta), all of Upleta Taluka.

Limbdi centre

The Mission's centre at Limbdi distributed 3,200 food packets, 6,710 kg. Rice, 5,560 kg. Khichudi, 2,550 kg. Atta/Wheat, 1,700 kg. Potato, 7,632 Packets of Biscuits, 888 kg. Tea, 450 kg. Soap-powder, 200 Plastic-Buckets, 70 kg. Milk-powder, 1,910 Blankets, 150 Chaddars, 25 Tents, 660 Tarpaulins, 3000 Assorted clothes, among thousands of earthquake victims. 700 people were served cooked food at Ranip area in Ahmedabad.

Areas Covered: *Surendranagar District*: Taluka Limbdi: Villages - Limbdi, Borna, Borana, Sauka, Mogidad, Laliyad, Shiyani, Devpura, Vastadi, Bodiya, Raska, Daultpur, Samla. Taluka Badwan:- Villages - Ramgadh, Ganjela, Memka. Taluka Halwad:- Villages - Ingroda, Kidi, Jogad, Ajit gardh. Taluka Sayla:- Villages - Ninama, Ratdaki.Total 22 Villages.

The Headquarters of Ramakrishna Mission at Belur Math directly sent more than 20,000 blankets and more than 10,000 tarpaulins (tents) for distribution among earthquake victims through the relief camps at Dhaneti, Bhuj and also through our centres at Rajkot, Porbandar and Limbdi.

Arrangements have been made to provide temporary shelters to a large number of quake affected people.

Rehabilitation: As of now, the Mission proposes to build quake-proof houses (approx. 200 nos.), school buildings, etc. in the village Dhaneti near Bhuj in 'Kutch' district. In Bharvada village in Porbandar district also we propose to build quake-proof houses (approx. 50 nos). The rehabilitation programme will be gradually extended to cover other quake affected areas depending upon the prevailing situation. The total cost is likely to exceed Rs. 10 crores.

We, therefore, appeal to one and all to contribute generously, by cash, M.O. or cheque/ DD drawn in favour of "Ramakrishna Mission" to the Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math.

All donations in cash or cheque/draft drawn in favour of ''Ramakrishna Mission'' are exempt from Income Tax under section 80G.

A/c payee Dollars / Pound Sterling checks are accepted, payable to 'Ramakrishna Mission'. To prevent loss/theft in transit, please send the checks by Registered Mail.

*All donations to Ramakrishna Math & Mission for Gujarat Earthquake Relief have been granted **100% Income-Tax exemption** till 30th of September 2001, under 80G-(2) of the Income-Tax Act vide the Gazette Notification dated 3.2.2001 issued by the Central Government.*

Regarding other channels of remittance: Donations can be sent by telex transfer, favouring *Ramakrishna Mission Savings Bank A/c NO. C-4861 with SBI, Belur Math Branch, Code No. 4640 through SBI, Overseas Branch, Calcutta.* After telex transfer kindly inform us by e-mail for follow up from our end. Our e-mail IDs are: <rkmhqbm@cal.vsnl.net.in> <rmic@vsnl.com>

Donations can be sent to the following addresses and for any kind of information please contact: 1. General Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Headquarters, P.O. Belur Math, Dist. Howrah, PIN - 711 202, Fax No: (033)654-4346, E-mail: <rkmhq@vsnl.com>; 2. Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture,Gol Park, Calcutta-700 029, FAX : (91-33-) 464-1307, E.Mail : <rmic@vsnl.com>; 3. President, Sri Ramakrishna Math, 31 Ramakrishna Math Road, Mylapore, Chennai 600004, Phones: 494-1232/1959, Fax: 493-4589, E-mail: <srkmath@vsnl.com>, website: www.sriramakrishnamath.org

OTHER NEWS

Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre of New York Celebrated the New Millennium with an Interfaith Service and Concert Dedicated to World Peace and Unity in the New Century

On Sunday morning, November 5, 2000, the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre of New York held a 'Millennium Interfaith Service and Concert Dedicated to World Peace and Unity in the New Century.'



The special service started at 11:00 a.m. In his introductory remarks, Swami Adiswarananda, Spiritual Leader of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, spoke of the importance of the realization of unity and mutual understanding and respect for all faith traditions. This realization could be attained only by the deepening of our spiritual consciousness.

The first guest speaker, Swami Chetanananda, spoke of world peace and unity from the point of view of Vedanta. He pointed out the importance of attaining personal spiritual realization in order to understand social responsibilities and duties towards others.

The second guest speaker was Rabbi Josef H.Gelberman. With many references to Hebrew Scriptures and his own personal experiences, the Rabbi engaged and inspired the devotees with his message of recognizing the already existing union and spiritual connection between all humans. He emphasized that through religious practices we grow towards a better understanding of ourselves as part of a greater human family. World peace would be a natural outcome of personal spiritual development.

The third guest speaker was Reverend Francis J.Gasparik who spoke from the Christian perspective, making special reference to the life and message of Saint Francis of Assisi. He spoke of Saint Francis' vision of loving every being in nature and respecting the divinity present within all human beings and all of creation. This love is the basis of world peace and unity.

The concluding part of the millennium event was the Concert by the Yale University Glee Club, held in the afternoon of the same day at the Saint Peter's Church, a New York City landmark. A highlight of the programme was the Glee Club's own rendering of *To the Infinite*, the original song composed for the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, featuring words from the poems and letters of Swami Vivekananda. The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre's Millennium Interfaith Service and Concert proved to be a grand success.

The Vedanta Society of Toronto, 120 Emmett Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6M 2E6

Run under the spiritual leadership of Swami Pramathananda, The Vedanta Society of Toronto, conducted the following activities during the year 1999-2000:

(i) Daily meditation in mornings and evenings, (ii) Sunday services consisting of hymns and lectures, (iii) Weekly children's programmes, (iv) Monthly Ramanama, spiritual classes and group discussions, (v) Summer retreat, lectures at the University and other

places, 'food drive' for children, scripture classes, book sales, birthday celebrations of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda, Janmastami, Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Maha Shivaratri, Buddha Jayanti, Guru Purnima, Christmas and New Year Eve.

Centenary of Swami Vivekananda's Visit to Mayavati (January 1901 - January 2001)

The centenary of Swami Vivekananda's visit to Mayavati as also to the places on his way to and way back from Mayavati was observed by Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, in collaboration with the interested people and institutions of those places together with the active co-operation and participation of Ramakrishna Mission Calcutta Students' Home, Belgharia, Calcutta, during the period 27 December 2000 to 21 January 2001. The programme included:

i) **A tour to Mayavati** along the route followed by Swami Vivekananda one hundred years back. A group of 22 pilgrims consisting of monastics of the Ramakrishna Order, devoted youths and devotees started from Howrah by train on the 27 December 2000 and reached Kathgodam on the 29 December and halted there for the night and started for Mayavati on the following morning—as did Swamiji exactly one hundred years ago. The group walked the whole way along Swamiji's route from Kathgodam to Mayavati halting for their night-rest at Swamiji's night-halting places—at Dhari (30 December 2000), Paharpani (31 December 2000), Maurnala (1 January 2001), Dhunaghat (2 January 2001)—finally reaching Mayavati at noon of 3 January 2001. There the group was welcomed with great enthusiasm and joy by monastics of Mayavati, Almora and Shyamalatal Ashramas and local people. While going to Mayavati the party had an arduous journey through chilly weather and in some places through snow-fall. At their halting places the pilgrim-group was received with overwhelming cordiality by the local people who offered warm hospitality to them with snacks. The pilgrim-group enlightened the local public through their informal talks and presentation of pictures, leaflets and booklets on Swamiji's temporary stay at their villages or towns a century ago and also about the life and message of Swamiji, Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi. After enjoying his sojourn of a fortnight Swami Vivekananda left Mayavati on the 18 January 1901. So, also a section of the pilgrims' group left Mayavati on the 18 January noon. Again walking the whole way the small group made its night halt, following Swamiji's itinerary, at Champawat on the 18th January 2001 at Chalti (adjacent to Dauri) on 19th January 2001 and reached Tanakpur on the 20 January 2001.

ii) **A spiritual retreat** held at Mayavati on 4 January 2001 guided by Swami Muktinathananda with about seventy-five participants; and a Cultural-cum-Spiritual Convention for the youth on 15 January 2001 guided by Swami Mumukshananda with about 50 participants.

iii) **Public meetings** held at Champawat, Tanakpur, Khatima and Pilibhit to commemorate the centenary of Swami Vivekananda's visit to all those towns on his return journey, on 18, 19, 20 and 21 January 2001 respectively. At Tanakpur and Khatima the meetings were held at three local colleges.

iv) **Distribution of blankets**, sweaters and other winter garments among the poor people of the surrounding villages.

OLD NEWS

In a function held at the Institute of Culture, Calcutta, on 22nd April 2000, Revered Swami Ranganathananda, President, Ramakrishna Math & Mission presented the Vivekananda Award to Pandit Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharya Shastri and Dr. V.R. Karandikar. Sri Viren J. Shah, Governor of West Bengal, presided over the meeting. Earlier, Swami Gahanananandaji inaugurated a youth convention at the Institute on 19th March, and Swami Atmasthanandaji released four newly published books of the Institute on the 23rd.

Dr. K.R. Narayanan, President of India, conferred Dr. Ambedkar National Award for Social Understanding and Uplift of the Weaker Sections (for the year 1996) on Narainpur Ashrama in a function held at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi, on 14th April. The award carried a plaque, a citation and a sum of Rupees ten lakhs.

The Malliankaranai sub-centre of Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Chennai, was made a full-fledged branch centre of Ramakrishna Mission under the name Ramakrishna Mission, Malliankaranai, on 6th May 2000 (Akshaya Tritiya day).

A branch centre of the Ramakrishna Mission has been started in Jammu under the name Ramakrishna Mission (Advaita Ashrama), Udhowala, Jammu, with the land, building, etc. received from the Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, Jammu.

Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, conducted a month-long Summer Camp for children in 8-15 age group from 1st to 28th May. More than 350 children took part in the camp. The daily programme included chanting, bhajans, yogasanas, craft work, drawing, and ethical and moral lessons.



BOOK REVIEWS

HINDU HERITAGE

HINDU HERITAGE. By Nirmala Ramachandran. Stamford Lake (Pvt) Ltd., 366, High Level Road, Pannipitiya, Sri Lanka. 2000, pp.180. Hardbound, Rs.1500/-.

The subject which is dealt with in this book is a vast one, and the book is able to provide only a glimpse of certain important facets of Hindu Heritage. This book logically begins with the 'Origins of Hinduism' and the evolution of the Hindu Pantheon. Therefrom, the book serially deals with the significance, traditional abodes, temples dedicated, etc. of Ganesha, Siva, Vishnu and Muruga. The aspects relating to the worship of Mother Goddess-Sakti-are conspicuously absent in this book. Most of the book is devoted to the temples and temple arts including iconography which has been profusely illustrated with the photos of the icons (mostly metal) personally collected by the author who hails from Sri Lanka. On the whole, the emphasis appears to be on the temples of South India (Tamils) and Sri Lanka. A book of this kind should bestow equal importance to all the great edifices of Hindu Heritage found in all parts of India and abroad. The author has taken care that the get up of this book satisfies the international standards. This well laid out and printed book with fairly good number of coloured illustrations will certainly attract all book lovers. This book may not be for the scholars in the subject of Human Heritage including art, architecture and religion. But it can serve as a primer to the young and old, especially NRIs who were not exposed adequately to the tenets of Hindu culture and civilization. Two chapters of this book are devoted to the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. It is gratifying to note that the author's total entitlement of the sixty percent of the sale proceeds is donated to the Ramakrishna Mission.

G.VENKATARAMANA REDDY

ATMABODHA

ATMABODHA OF ADI SHANKARACHARYA. Exposition by Vijay Kaskhedikar. Sanskrit Bhasha Pracharini Sabha, Nagpur. 1999. pp.92. Rs.50/-.

Atmabodha is one of the important prakarana granthas (introductory texts to Vedanta philosophy) of Sri Sankaracharya. According to this text, the purpose and goal of human existence is the realisation of one's own essential nature as the formless, attributeless, infinite reality called Brahman. There are several types of spiritual practices or sadhanas prescribed in our scriptures to reach this goal. Atmabodha insists that whatever be the mode of our sadhana, it is not going to help us unless it leads to a transformation and sublimation of our consciousness. Consciousness alone is the direct cause of liberation. A man holding on to a lamp post and moving around it throughout the night will never be able to reach his home. Similarly an aspirant performing any number of spiritual practices without attempting the transmutation of his consciousness will never be able to reach his goal.

Action, whether secular or spiritual, involves a subject and an object. As long as an activity is done with subject-object consciousness, it cannot destroy ignorance. We have to bring in the knowledge of the consciousness of the self in all our activities. That knowledge will gradually remove the impurities of the chitta and awaken the presence of unitary consciousness that is present in and through every one of us. So our spiritual practice should be to remove the idea of duality from our minds and instil the sense of divinity that is inherent in us. Every act of our sadhana should be towards the siddhanta, i.e., the goal of spiritual activity, which is the experience of unitary consciousness. That should be the basis underlying all our sadhanas.

The author is a follower of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. As such he expounds the text in the light of the lives and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda. The book is written in a very informal style, scrupulously avoiding technicalities, hair-splitting arguments and pedagogic interpretations. The book is aimed at serving as a practical guide to elementary Advaita Vedanta philosophy for earnest spiritual seekers.

The quality of presentation and printing leaves scope for improvement.

SWAMI ABHIRAMANANDA

SRI CHANDRASEKHARA BHARATHI

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF H.H.SRI CHANDRASEKHARA BHARATHI. By Prof.N.Nanjunda Sastry. Lalita Prakashana, Hanumanthanagar, Bangalore 560019. pp.198. Rs.120/-.

Who has not heard of the hallowed Head of the Sringeri Mutt H.H.Chandrasekhara Bharati Mahaswami

(1892--1954). In this short biography, Shri Nanjunda Sastry has brought out the richness and greatness of the saint.

The book consists of 24 chapters (as the book says), the first thirteen being the biography which traces His Holiness' life from early childhood, through youth to his giving up the body. Chapters fourteen to nineteen are an assessment of his life's works and influence on the devotees who naturally gravitated towards him.

Born as Narasimha in a family known for its learning and erudition, even though financially not well-off, his great gifts were obvious from the very beginning. His parents, Gopa Sastry and Lakshamma, wanted to educate him in the English tradition and get him into a well-paid secure job, for he was their only surviving child. Twelve others had died either at birth or in early infancy. However, he was fated for other, loftier things and he entered a *pathashala* of the Sringeri Mutt. He embraced sannyasa and on the 6th of April 1912, was installed as the Head of the Sringeri Mutt. He discharged both his spiritual and administrative roles so well that devotees thronged from all sides to get the blessings of this holy man who had shown them all the peace, comfort and joy of inner tranquillity. In 1954, he gave up his body. It was the morning of Mahalaya Amavasya, September 26th. After a cold bath in the river Thunga, when he was still in the water, a loud thud was heard. When the devotees rushed up to help him, it was seen that the Spirit had left; his face shone with a rare brilliance. He was buried beside his guru.

The chapters following give various anecdotes that show His Holiness' Yogic powers, his compassion and love for anyone who came to him. He did not exclude anyone. His lessons were taught in such a way that the learner understood the real meaning.

Shri Sastry has written the book in a clear, lucid style and has made its subject—the life of one of the greatest men of our times—approachable and easily understood. Through the book, we understand the greatness of those who, like Sri Ramakrishna, come to change the established way of thinking and give spirituality--and therefore religion—a whole new dimension.

Shri Sastry deserves our thanks for bringing this life within our reach. A good feature is, he does not belabour a point. He has a light touch, which makes the book easily readable instead of ponderous and heavy.

However, one mistake has to be rectified. The chapter numbering and naming in the Contents and within the book do not match. The book actually contains only nineteen chapters when the Contents Page proclaims twenty four. This is because the Benedictory Message, the author's Foreword and the Appendices have also been numbered in the Contents causing confusion. This must be set right in the next edition.

PREMA RAGHUNATH

A CD ON SWAMIJI AND HIS WORKS

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: LIFE, WORKS AND RESEARCH. A CD by Advaita Ashrama, 5 Dehi Entally Road, Calcutta 700014. Rs.700.

A small step in releasing the CD is a giant leap into the educative field of the new millennium.

A teacher from Bulgaria, seriously interested in Oriental Studies, is scanning from one book to another in Chennai's book store and buys one volume of *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. When she realises that there are nine volumes like that, plus six volumes of extensive research material and also the Life, she gets disappointed at not being able to carry all this encyclopaedic knowledge. But her face brightens up when it is brought to her notice that there is a CD containing all this and much more. Immediately with a huge sense of gratitude she makes it her prized possession for only Rs.700.

Another Indian youth, though possessing the books, has to write an essay on Swamiji's favourite quote: 'Think for yourself'. He types 'think' in word-search and finds the results. How satisfied he is!

So, let us explore the CD and see how it can benefit us.

In the main menu, if one clicks on 'Benediction', one meets the present President of the Ramakrishna Order, Revered Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, delivering his touching benedictory remarks on the subject.

The first timers can warm themselves up by clicking 'Call to Humanity' where the invigorating quotations of Swamiji for the masses are available. Quotations are classified under hot topics like 'Powers of the Mind', 'Man the Maker of His Destiny', 'Faith and Strength', 'Education and Society', etc. It must be remembered that this is an educative CD and not an entertainment one. The above session will equip one with a concentrated mind for embarking on a serious study.

You can click on 'Gallery' to view an amazing collection of pictures significant and related to the life of

Swamiji, or click 'Story of Vivekananda for Children' to have a bird's eye view of the life of Swamiji.

The Gallery, consisting of nearly 300 photographs with audio descriptions of important personalities and places connected with the life of Swamiji, serves as a very good introduction to the works contained in the CD and presents Swamiji's life in a nutshell.

Please don't forget to click 'Our Centres', which contains the addresses, phone numbers, email and web addresses and activities of all Ramakrishna Math and Mission centres. Thus, you will be aware of the nearest centre and will be able to participate in important programmes and festivals.

Suppose you have loaded 'Works' or 'Life, Research and Thinkers'. Click on the search facility at the bottom of the page. You have the option to do an index search or a word search. Click word search and you find the dialog box prompting you to type in a word. Suppose you type 'concentration' and then click search. You will find that the total number of results found will appear at the bottom and the sentences containing the word will appear with the volume number and page number. If you click on any of the search results, you get access to the page where the search result lies. You can take print-outs of the pages if you desire. If you want to go back to the next search result, click search again and the results appear from where you left.

You can click on any volume or double-click on the volumes and enter the page number to go to any desired page in the 'Works' or 'Life, Research and Thinkers'. You can view Sanskrit text and its transliteration whenever there are Sanskrit quotes in the pages. Also, you can get descriptions of technical words and about persons appearing in a page by clicking on them or by looking them up in the glossary.

There is a 'quiz' in the main menu where a number of questions are available in objective form. The questions are mostly based on the Life of Swami Vivekananda; so study his life well before testing yourself in the quiz.

BR. NIRAJ

SHEIKH AWN'S SAYINGS

SHEIKH AWN'S GRACIOUS SAYINGS. Trans. (from original Tamil) by M.I.Liagnath Ali. Janab MJ Basheer Ahmed, Vazhuthur. 1995. pp.125. Softcover, Rs.20/-.

This slim volume is a compilation of words of wisdom from Muslim saints, especially on the oneness of religious belief. What is called "monism (advaita), is called *tauheed* in Arabic" (Gracious Sayings, p.107). Then again "By and large Hindu Spirituality is highly related to that of Islam. I have studied this in several treatises. Hence we need not have differences amongst us. Whichever be the religions (individuals follow), they are in fact one and the same." (Gracious Sayings, p.83).

What wise words! If more people could think in this way, what a wonderful world it would be. Yet it is so true that one wonders how everyone can't see it.

The book contains pithy comments on many aspects of religious beliefs, both universal and general and Islamic in particular. In every page the tolerance of the author is very evident and the one thread running through the book is commonality of purpose, i.e., reaching the Goal.

Tamil and English versions are both present—the Tamil version on the left and its English rendering on the right. Thus it is useful to a larger number of people spread over the whole of India. The English could perhaps have been checked for grammar and syntax—but the meaning and message are so relevant in this difficult day and age that the errors pale into insignificance.

PREMA RAGHUNATH

BOOK RECEIVED

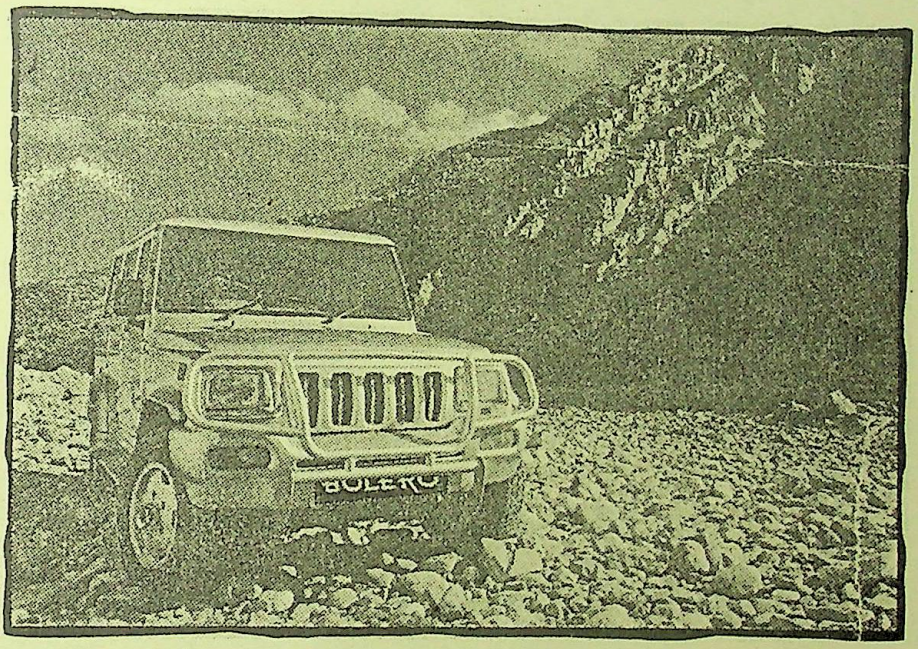
SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND HIS NEW PHILOSOPHY, by Dr. H. N. Sarkar, MA, PhD. Published by Manmathanath Roy, Sri Ramakrishna Kendra, Jagacha, Howrah 711321, WB, pages 109, hard-bound, Rs. 60

A Life of Reason

The life of wisdom is a life of reason. It is important to learn how to think clearly. Clear thinking is not a haphazard enterprise. It requires proper training. It is through clear thinking that we are able to properly direct our will, stick with our true purpose, and discover the connections we have to others and the duties that follow from those relationships. —Epictetus

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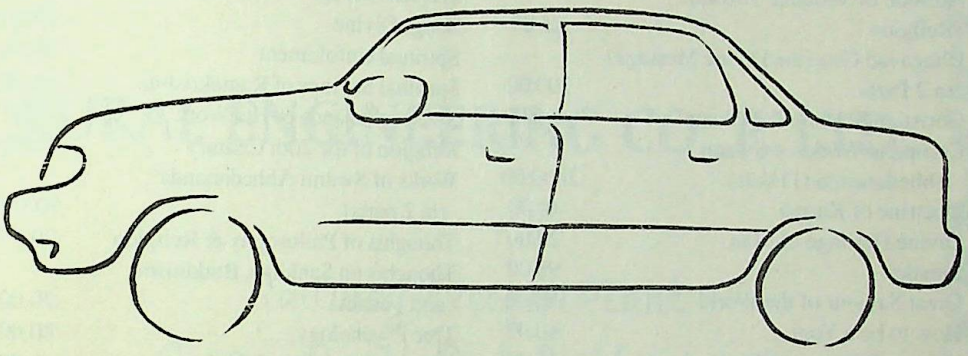
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but they alone live who live for others,
the rest are more dead than alive.

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